Al-Albani Unveiled

An Exposition of His Errors and Other Important Issues

Compiled by
Sayf ad-Din Ahmed Ibn Muhammad

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In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

PREFACE

All praise be to Allahu ta'ala. Peace and blessings be on His final Messenger, Sayyidina Muhammad. Auspicious salutations be on his pure Ahl al-Bayt (people of the Prophet's House) and on all his just and devoted Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all); and last but not least praise be upon the glorious pious predecessors (Salaf as-Salihin) and their successors who are the Ahl-as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah (People of the Sunnah and Community) of the four existing schools of Sacred Law (Fiqh).

O you who believe! What you are about to read is of dire importance to the believer who accepts the authority of the Noble Hadith, second only to the Holy Qur'an al-Karim. I here present to the open minded believer an exposition of the mistakes and contradictions of probably the foremost Hadith Shaykh of the 'Salafiyya' sect, by the name of Shaykh Muhammad Nasiruddeen al-Albani. I was asked by some brothers on the status and rank of al-Albani, and fearing the declaration of Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him):

"He who is asked something he knows and conceals it will have a bridle of fire put on him on the Day of Resurrection" (Sunan Abu Dawood, 3/3650, English ed'n);

I decided to compile this short work. Let me stress at the outset, this work was primarily compiled to correct some notions held by al-Albani and secondarily the "Salafi" sect; hence the last part of this work has been entitled: "*and Other Important issues*."

This short piece of work has been edited and abridged from the four volume set which emphatically and clearly outlines al-Albani's mistakes, contradictions, slanders and even lies in the honourable and sacred Islamic Science of Hadith (Uloom al Hadith), by the well known scholar, Al-Shaykh Hasan ibn Ali al-Saqqaf (may Allah reward him for his effort) of Amman, Jordan; from his work entitled: "*Tanaqadat al-Albani al-Wadihat*" (The Clear Contradictions of al-Albani).

Shaykh Saqqaf is a contemporary Shafi'i scholar of Hadith and Fiqh. His Shaykh's include Hashim Majdhub of Damascus in Shafi'i Fiqh, Muti' Hammami in estate division, Muhammad Hulayyil of Amman in Arabic Grammar, and he has been given written authorization (Ijaza) in the field of Hadith from one of the greatest Hadith scholars of our time - Shaykh Abdullah Muhammad al-Ghimari (may the Mercy of Allah be upon him) of Tangiers, Morocco [born 1910 C.E; died Feb. 1413/1993 C.E]; an ex-Professor of Hadith at Al-Azhar University, author of nearly 150 works, his late brother: Ahmad ibn Muhammad (Allah's mercy be upon him) was a great Hafiz of Hadith, (see later for the definition of Hafiz of Hadith). Shaykh Ghimari has declared in one of his published Fatwa's that al-Albani is an innovator (mubtadi) in Islam, (al-Albani has criticised Shaykh Ghimari's classifications of Hadith in some of his works; but then

contradicted himself in others - see the quotes from Shaykh Saqqaf later). Shaykh Saqqaf presently teaches a circle of students in Amman and has published over forty five books and treatises on Hadith, tenets of faith (Aqeeda), Fiqh and heresiology.

So as to enlighten the reader who is unaware of al-Albani's status, the following is a short biography as given in the inside back cover of the English translation of al-Albani's booklet by the title 'Adaab uz Zufaaf' (The Etiquettes of Marriage and Wedding) as published by his followers in England (viz.: "Jami'at Ihyaa Minhaj al Sunnah") :-

"Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen Al-Albani was born in the city of Ashkodera, capital of Albania in 1914 CE. While he was young his parents migrated with him to Damascus, Syria. From an early age he became fascinated by the science of Hadith and thereafter spent his time devoted to seeking knowledge. In later life he was given Professorship of Hadith at the Islamic University of Madinah. He is well known to students and scholars for his knowledge and writings. He has many well known students and has visited places through out the Middle East and Europe. He was forced to migrate from Syria to Jordan. He has been of enormous service to the Prophetic Hadith, taking great pains to check and sort out the authentic from the weak and fabricated narrations. He has produced many pamphlets and books, some of them running into many volumes - on topics of great importance to the Muslims - and has fully checked many of the famous books of Hadith - the Sunan of Tirmidhi, Abu Dawood, An-Nasai and Ibn Majah, along with Suyooti's huge "Jami-us-Sagheer" and "Mishkat-ul Masabih". He is the foremost scholar of Hadith and related sciences of this age."

It is this last statement which is highly far-fetched, and it is the predominantly imaginary belief of his misguided followers in certain parts of the world. Since only Allah knows who is the "foremost scholar of Hadith and related sciences of this age." I say this because there are others who may well be the 'foremost scholar'. One thing that may be noticed from the above biography, is that al-Albani does not seem to have been given any authorization (*ijaza*) in Hadith from any recognised scholar of Hadith. I have read other biographies and asked some of his supporters in England to give me the name of al-Albani's Hadith Shaykh; but to no avail. It seems that al-Albani "taught" himself the science of Hadith by spending many hours in the famous library of Damascus - al-Maktabatuz Zahiriyyah. In the biography written in the preface of the English edition of his work - "Sifah salah an-Nabee", it was also stated that he was: "influenced by articles in 'al-Manaar' magazine." The last named magazine was edited by the notorious freemason - Muhammad Rashid Ridah (d.1935 CE)!

Al-Albani has not made a handful of forgivable errors, but rather well over 1200, which are only forgivable if he himself admits and corrects his mistakes by repenting in front of the People of Knowledge, as well as the sincere believers who may have been relying on his 'classifications of Hadith'. The selected contradictions from "Tanaqadat al-Albani al-Wadihat" have been derived for sake of brevity from volume's one and two only, and whenever the symbol * is indicated, this corresponds to the original reference to the Arabic edition. The reader should also remember that whenever anything appears in brackets, then these are usually my words and not that of Shaykh Saqqaf. It should also be said that Volume 1 of the original contains 250 ahadith, in which al-Albani has said Sahih (an authentic Hadith) in one of his books and then contradicted himself by saying Daeef (a weak Hadith) in another of his books, or similar mistakes and contradictions.

Volume 2 contains 652 Ahadith of the same description as the above, or similar contradictions in individual rijal (biography of a Hadith narrator) of the Sanad (the chain of transmission of a specific Hadith) of the Hadiths in question. In some instances (e.g. Vol.2, pp. 63-64), Shaykh Saqqaf shows how a Hadith narrator is 'trustworthy' when al-Albani wants to use a Hadith to prove something, but becomes 'untrustworthy' when in a Hadith used by the person al-Albani is arguing against; an extremely embarrassing mistake for anyone of any scholarly integrity. These books by Shaykh Saqqaf have already done much to pull the rug from under 'Salafiyyism' in Jordan and even in 'Saudi' Arabia, where the first volume alone has seen no less than SIX reprints in a single year alone! These books are extremely hot property that any 'Salafi' (or anti-Salafi) who reads Arabic will want to buy. I ask you, how many times does an inept student of Hadith like al-Albani have to contradict himself before he ceases to be of authority? Can you find even ten such contradictions in the works of the traditional memorizers of Hadith (Huffaz), those who had memorized at least 100,000 Ahadith with their sanad's? The great scholars like Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, al-Nasai, Daraqutni, Hakim, Asqalani and so on . . . . Allah's mercy be upon them. The discerning believer should know that al-Albani has not in his memory anywhere near a 100,000 Ahadith in his memory, in fact as far as we know there is no one who is a Hafiz of Hadith today! If there is, we say please come forward and prove it, and only Allah knows best!

During the course of examining various Hadiths, Shaykh Saqqaf compared them to the written opinion of al-Albani. Eventually Shaykh Saqqaf began a compilation of al-Albani's mistakes. He came across contradictions, supposition, inadequate research and the blatant perversion of sayings quoted from the great scholars of Islam. He was especially worried by the fact that many students and members of the youth who do not have enough or no knowledge are simply not bothering to investigate the Hadiths classified by al-Albani, are being misled into blind ignorance; even though these very people are the one's calling staunchly and vociferously for the complete abandonment of taqleed (usually translated as "blind following" by the opponents, but in reality it is the following of qualified and verified scholarship of a Mujtahid Mutlaq [an absolutely independent scholar of the highest calibre] like the Imam's Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) and the like, as well as the scholars who adhered to and promulgated a particular school of fiqh [Madhhab] for the greater part of Islam's history; taqleed in simple language is the following of one of the four existing schools of fiqh). These people seem to contradict themselves, as well as displaying hypocrisy when they go around making it a priority to attack the followers of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i or Hanbali schools of Sacred Law; even though they themselves are practising taqleed of an individual(s)!

Bearing in mind the Hadith reported by Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him):

"Whoever sees an evil, he must prevent it with his hand, and if he has no power for this action, then he should prevent it with his tongue, and if he cannot do this, then he should at least consider it a vice in his heart, and this is a very low level of one's Iman (faith)." [see Sahih Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Nasai - as recorded in Targheeb Wa'l-Tarheeb by Al-Hafiz Mundhiri, d. 1258 C.E; Rahimahumullah],

and even more explicitly from Imam al-Darimi (Rahimahullah) who reported Ziyad Ibn Hudair (Rahimahullah) saying:

"Umar (Allah be pleased with him) said to me: Do you know what can destroy Islam?" I said: "No." He said: "It is destroyed by the mistakes of scholars, the argument of the hypocrites about the book (of Allah), and the opinions of the misguided leaders." (see Mishkatul Masabih, 1/269, Trans. A.H. Siddiqui).

We took the liberty to forewarn and guide the many sincere believers who are turning to their faith from blundering into miscomprehension and wrong by translating selectively from Shaykh Saqqaf's books.

In order to safe keep today's youth from falling into heresy, Shaykh Saqqaf has embarked upon a quest to expose such a person who considers himself to be among the great scholars of Hadith like, Imam's al-Bukhari and Muslim (Rahimahumullah), to the extent that one of his deluded followers considered him to be in the rank of the Amir al-Mu'minin fil Hadith, Shaykh al-Islam al-Hafiz Ahmad Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (the Shafi'i Imam who authored the most famous commentary of Sahih al-Bukhari and many other books, d. 852/1449 C.E; Rahimahullah).

As for Shaykh Saqqaf, the respected reader may get the impression that he has an uncompromising demeanour in some of his comments made straight after he exposes an error of al-Albani. I make no apology for his style of exposition, since many Allah fearing scholars have been uncompromising in the past when it comes to enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil as has been prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah (e.g. in the refutations against the heretical sects like the Khawarij, Mu'tazila, Shi'ah . . . .), so long as it forewarns the general masses from accepting the falsities of the heretics and other like minded "scholars". May be Shaykh Saqqaf considers al-Albani to be an innovator, just as his late teacher - Shaykh Ghimari (Rahimahullah) considered him to be. There are many Hadith which command us to detest the Heretics. For example, Ibrahim ibn Maisara reported Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) as saying:

"He who showed respect to an innovator he in fact aided in the demolishing of Islam." (Bayhaqi - see Mishkatul Masabih, 1/189, English ed'n).

I hope the esteemed reader will read this short piece of work with vigilance and an open mind, especially those who have been loyal readers and supporters of al-Albani's books and decrees. I sincerely hope that this work will be of great benefit to all who read it and pray that Allah accept it as a good deed done purely for His pleasure. I would also like to thank all those brothers who assisted me in the compilation of this work, especially to the brother who supplied me with Shaykh Saqqaf's books.

May Allah forgive us for any shortcomings and errors. Amin.

Al-Albani Unveiled
Al-Albani's Weakening of Someof Imam Bukhari's and Muslim's Ahadith.

Al-Albani has said in "*Sharh al-Aqeedah at-Tahaweeah*, pg. 27-28" (8th edition, Maktab al-Islami) by Shaykh Ibn Abi al-Izz al-Hanafi (Rahimahullah), that any Hadith coming from the Sahih collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim is Sahih, not because they were narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, but because the Ahadith are in fact correct. But he clearly contradicts himself, since he has weakened Ahadith from Bukhari and Muslim himself! Now let us consider this information in the light of elaboration :-

SELECTED TRANSLATIONS FROM VOLUME 1
No. 1: (*Pg. 10 No.1)
Hadith: The Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Allah says I will be an opponent to 3 persons on the day of resurrection: (a) One who makes a covenant in my Name but he proves treacherous, (b) One who sells a free person (as a slave) and eats the price (c) And one who employs a laborer and gets the full work done by him, but doesn't pay him his wages." [Bukhari no 2114-Arabic version, or see the English version 3/430 pg 236].

Al-Albani said that this Hadith was DAEEF in "*Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh*, 4/111 No.4054". Little does he know that this Hadith has been narrated by Ahmad and Bukhari from Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him)!!

No. 2: (*Pg. 10 No.2)
Hadith: "Sacrifice only a grown up cow unless it is difficult for you, in which case sacrifice a ram." [Muslim No.1963-Arabic edition, or see the English version 3/4836 pg. 1086].

Al-Albani said that this Hadith was DAEEF in "*Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh*, 6/64 No.6222." Although this Hadith has been narrated by Imam's Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Nisai and Ibn Majah from Jaabir (Allah be pleased with him)!!

No. 3: (*Pg. 10 No.3)
Hadith: "Amongst the worst people in Allah's sight on the Day of Judgement will be the man who makes love to his wife and she to him, and he divulges her secret." [Muslim No.1437-Arabic edition].

Al-Albani claims that this Hadith is DAEEF in "*Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh*, 2/197 No.2005." Although it has been narrated by Muslim from Abi Sayyed (Allah be pleased with him)!!

No. 4: (*Pg. 10 No.4)
Hadith: "If someone woke up at night (for prayers) let him begin his prayers with 2 light *rak'ats*." [Muslim No.768].

Al-Albani stated that this Hadith was DAEEF in "*Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh*, 1/213 No.718." Although it is narrated by Muslim and Ahmad from Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him)!!

No. 5: (*Pg. 11 No.5)

Hadith: "You will rise with shining foreheads and shining hands and feet on the Day of Judgement by completing Wudhu properly. . . . ." [Muslim No.246].

No. 5: (*Pg. 11 No.5)
Hadith: "You will rise with shining foreheads and shining hands and feet on the Day of Judgement by completing Wudhu properly. . . . ." [Muslim No.246].

No. 6: (*Pg. 11 No.6)
Hadith: "The greatest trust in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgement is the man who doesn't divulge the secrets between him and his wife." [Muslim no's 124 and 1437]

Al-Albani claims it is DAEEF in "Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 2/192 No.1986." Although it has been narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Abu Dawood from Abi Sayyed (Allah be pleased with him)!!

No. 7: (*Pg. 11 No.7)
Hadith: "If anyone READS the last ten verses of *Surah al-Kahf* he will be saved from the mischief of the Dajjal." [Muslim No.809].

Al-Albani said that this Hadith was DAEEF in "Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 5/233 No.5772."
NB- The word used by Muslim is MEMORIZED and not READ as al-Albani claimed; what an awful mistake! This Hadith has been narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Nisai from Abi Darda (Allah be pleased with him)!! (Also recorded by Imam Nawawi in "Riyadh us-Saliheen, 2/1021" of the English ed'n).

No. 8: (*Pg. 11 No.8)
Hadith: "The Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) had a horse called al-Laheef." [Bukhari, see Fath al-Bari of Hafiz Ibn Hajar 6/58 No.2855].

But Al-Albani said that this Hadith was DAEEF in "Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 4/208 No.4489." Although it has been narrated by Bukhari from Sahl ibn Sa'ad (Allah be pleased with him)!!!

Shaykh Saqqaf said: "This is only anger from anguish, little from a lot and if it wasn't for the fear of lengthening and boring the reader, I would have mentioned many other examples from al-Albani's books whilst reading them. Imagine what I would have found if I had traced everything he wrote?"

AL-ALBANI'S INADEQUACY IN RESEARCH (*Vol. 1 pg. 20)
Saqqaf said: "The strange and amazing thing is that Shaykh al-Albani misquoted many great Hadith scholars and disregards them by his lack of knowledge, either directly or indirectly! He crowns himself as an unbeatable source and even tries to imitate the great scholars by using such terms like "*Lam aqif ala sanadih*", which means "I could not find the chain of narration", or using similar phrases! He also accuses some of the best memorizers of Hadith for lack of attention, even though he is the one best described by that!" Now for some examples to prove our point:

No. 9 : (* Pg. 20 No. 1)
Al-Albani said in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 6/251 No.1847" (in connection to a narration from Ali): "I could not find the sanad."

Saqqaf said: "Ridiculous! If this al-Albani was any scholar of Islam, then he would have known that this Hadith can be found in "Sunan al-Bayhaqi, 7/121" :- Narrated by Abu Sayyed ibn Abi Amarah, who said that Abu al-Abbas Muhammad ibn Yaqoob who said to us that Ahmad ibn Abdal Hamid said that Abu Usama from Sufyan from Salma ibn Kahil from Mu'awiya ibn Soayd who said, 'I found this in my fathers book from Ali (Allah be pleased with him).'"

No. 10 : (* Pg. 21 No.2)
Al-Albani said in 'Irwa al-Ghalil, 3/283': Hadith of Ibn Umar 'Kisses are usury,' I could not find the sanad."

Saqqaf said: "This is outrageously wrong for surely this is mentioned in 'Fatawa al-Shaykh ibn Taymiyya al-Misriyah (3/295)': 'Harb said Obaidullah ibn Mu'az said to us, my father said to me that Soayd from Jiballa who heard Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) as saying: Kisses are usury.' And these narrators are all authentic according to Ibn Taymiyya!"

No 11 : (* Pg. 21 No.3)
Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud (Allah be pleased with him): "The Qur'an was sent down in 7 dialects. Everyone of its verses has an explicit and implicit meaning and every interdiction is clearly defined." Al-Albani stated in his checking of "Mishkat ul-Masabih, 1/80 No.238" that the author of Mishkat concluded many Ahadith with the words "Narrated in Sharh us-Sunnah," but when he examined the chapter on Ilm and in Fadail al-Qur'an he could not find it!

Saqqaf said: "The great scholar has spoken Wrongly as usual. I wish to say to this fraud that if he is seriously interested in finding this Hadith we suggest he looks in the chapter entitled 'Al-Khusama fi al-Qur'an' from Sharh-us-Sunnah (1/262), and narrated by Ibn Hibban in his Sahih (No.74), Abu Ya'ala in his Musnad (No.5403), Tahawi in Sharh al-Mushkil al-Athar (4/172), Bazzar (3/90 Kashf al-Asrar) and Haythami has mentioned it in Majmoo'a al-Zawaid (7/152) and he has ascribed it to Bazzar, Abu Ya'ala and Tabarani in al-Awsat who said that the narrators are trustworthy."

No 12 : (* Pg. 22 No.4)
Al-Albani stated in his "Sahihah, 1/230" while he was commenting on Hadith No.149: "The believer is the one who does not fill his stomach. . . . The Hadith from Aisha as mentioned by Al-Mundhiri (3/237) and by Al-Hakim from Ibn Abbas, I (Albani) could not find it in Mustadrak al-Hakim after checking it in his 'Thoughts' section."

Saqqaf said: "Please don't encourage the public to fall into the void of ignorance which you have tumbled into! If you check Mustadrak al-Hakim (2/12) you will find it! This proves that you are unskilled at using book indexes and the memorization of Hadith!"

No 13 : (* Pg. 23)
Another ridiculous assumption is made by al-Albani in his "Sahihah, 2/476" where he claims that the Hadith: "Abu Bakr is from me, holding the position of (my) hearing" is not in the

book 'Hilya'.

We suggest you look in the book "Hilya , 4/73!"

No 14 : (*Pg. 23 No.5)
Al-Albani said in his "Sahihah, 1/638 No.365, 4th edition": "Yahya ibn Malik has been ignored by the 6 main scholars of Hadith, for he was not mentioned in the books of Tahdhib, Taqreeb or Tadhhib."

Shaykh Saqqaf: "That is what you say! It is not like that, for surely he is mentioned in Tahdhib al-Tahdhib of Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (12/19 Dar al-Fikr edition) by the nickname Abu Ayoob al-Maraagi!!

So beware!

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF AL-ALBANI'S CONTRADICTIONS

No 15 : (* Pg. 7)
Al-Albani has criticized the Imam al-Muhaddith Abu'l Fadl Abdullah ibn al-Siddiq al-Ghimari (Rahimahullah) for mentioning in his book "al-Kanz al-Thameen" a Hadith from Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) with reference to the narrator Abu Maymoona: "Spread salaam, feed the poor. . . ."

Al-Albani said in "Silsilah al-Daeefa, 3/492", after referring this Hadith to Imam Ahmad (2/295) and others: "I say this is a weak sanad, Daraqutni has said 'Qatada from Abu Maymoona from Abu Hurayra: Unknown, and it is to be discarded.'" Al-Albani then said on the same page: "Notice, a slapdash has happened with Suyuti and Munawi when they came across this Hadith, and I have also shown in a previous reference, No.571, that al-Ghimari was also wrong for mentioning it in al-Kanz."

But in reality it is al-Albani who has become slapdashed, because he has made a big contradiction by using this same sanad in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 3/238" where he says, "Classified by Ahmad (2/295), al-Hakim . . . from Qatada from Abu Maymoona, and he is trusted as in the book 'al-Taqreeb', and Hakim said: 'A Sahih sanad', and al-Dhahabi agreed with Hakim!

So, by Allah glance at this mistake! Who do you think is wrong, the Muhaddith al-Ghimari (also Suyuti and Munawi) or al-Albani?

No 16 : (* Pg. 27 No.3)
Al-Albani wanted to weaken a Hadith which allowed women to wear golden jewellery, and in the sanad for that Hadith there is Muhammad ibn Imara. Al-Albani claimed that Abu Haatim said that this narrator was: "Not that strong," see the book "Hayat al-Albani wa-Atharu. . . part 1, pg. 207."

The truth is that Abu Haatim al-Razi said in the book 'al-Jarh wa-Taadeel, 8/45': "A good narrator but not that strong. . ." So note that al-Albani has removed the phrase "A good

narrator !"

NB-(al-Albani has made many of the Hadith which forbid Gold to women to be Sahih, in fact other scholars have declared these Hadith to be daeef and abrogated by other Sahih Hadith which allow the wearing of gold by women. One of the well known Shaykh's of the "Salafiyya" - Yusuf al-Qardawi said in his book: 'Islamic awakening between rejection and extremism, pg. 85: "In our own times, Shaykh Nasir al-Din al-Albani has come out with an opinion, different from the consensus on permitting women to adorn themselves with gold, which has been accepted by all madhahib for the last fourteen centuries. He not only believes that the isnad of these Ahadith is authentic, but that they have not been revoked. So, he believes, the Ahadith prohibit gold rings and earrings."

So who is the one who violates the ijma of the Ummah with his extreme opinions?!)

No 17 : (* Pg. 37 No.1)
Hadith: Mahmood ibn Lubayd said, "Allah's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) was informed about a man who had divorced his wife 3 times (in one sitting), so he stood up angrily and said: 'Is he playing with Allah's book whilst I am still amongst you?' Which made a man stand up and say, 'O Allah's Messenger, shall I not kill him?'" (al-Nisai).

Al-Albani declared this Hadith to be Daeef in his checking of "Mishkat al-Masabih, 2/981, 3rd edition, Beirut, 1405 A.H; Maktab al-Islami", where he says: "This man (the narrator) is reliable, but the isnad is broken or incomplete for he did not hear it directly from his father."

Al-Albani then contradicts himself in the book "Ghayatul Maram Takhreej Ahadith al-Halal wal Haram, No.261, pg. 164, 3rd Edn, Maktab al-Islami, 1405 A.H"; by saying it is SAHIH!!!

No 18 : (* Pg. 37 No.2)
Hadith: "If one of you was sleeping under the sun, and the shadow covering him shrank, and part of him was in the shadow and the other part of him was in the sun, he should rise up." Al-Albani declared this Hadith to be SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami al-Sagheer wa Ziyadatuh (1/266/761)", but then contradicts himself by saying it is DAEEF in his checking of "Mishkat ul-Masabih, 3/1337 No.4725, 3rd Ed" and he has referred it to the Sunan of Abu Dawood!"

No 19 : (* Pg. 38 No.3)
Hadith: "The Friday prayer is obligatory on every Muslim." Al-Albani rated this Hadith to be DAEEF in his checking of "Mishkat al-Masabih, 1/434", and said: "Its narrators are reliable but it is discontinuous as is indicated by Abu Dawood". He then contradicts himself in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 3/54 No. 592", and says it is SAHIH!!!

So beware o wise men!

No 20 : (* Pg. 38 No.4)
Al-Albani has made another contradiction. He has trusted Al-Muharrar ibn Abu Hurayra in one place and then weakened him in another. Al-Albani certifies in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 4/301" that Muharrar is a trustee with Allah's help, and Hafiz (Ibn Hajar) saying about him "accepted", is not accepted, and therefore the sanad is Sahih.

He then contradicts himself in "Sahihah 4/156" where he makes the sanad DAEEF by

saying: "The narrators in the sanad are all Bukhari's (i.e.; used by Imam al-Bukhari) men, except for al-Muharrar who is one of the men of Nisai and Ibn Majah only. He was not trusted accept by Ibn Hibban, and that's why al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar did not trust him, Instead he only said 'accepted!'"

So beware of this fraud!

No 21 : (* Pg. 39 No.5)
Hadith: Abdallah ibn Amr (Allah be pleased with him): "The Friday prayer is incumbent on whoever heard the call" (Abu Dawood). Al-Albani stated that this Hadith was HASAN in "Irwa al-Ghalil 3/58", he then contradicts himself by saying it is DAEEF in "Mishkatul Masabih 1/434 no 1375"!!!

No 22 : (* Pg. 39 No.6)
Hadith: Anas ibn Malik (Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) used to say : "Do not be hard on yourself, otherwise Allah will be hard on you. When a people were hard on themselves, then Allah was hard on them." (Abu Dawood)

Al-Albani stated that this Hadith was DAEEF in his checking of "Mishkat, 1/64", but he then contradicts himself by saying that this Hadith is HASAN in "Ghayatul Maram, pg. 141"!!

No 23: (* Pg. 40 No.7)
Hadith of Sayyida Aisha (Allah be pleased with her): "Whoever tells you that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to urinate while standing, do not believe him. He never urinated unless he was sitting." (Ahmad, Nisai and Tirmidhi)

Al-Albani said that this sanad was DAEEF in "Mishkat 1/117." He then contradicts himself by saying it is SAHIH in "Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah 1/345 No.201"!!!

So take a glance dear reader!

No 24 : (* Pg. 40 No.8)
Hadith: "There are three which the angels will never approach: The corpse of a disbeliever, a man who wears ladies perfume, and one who has had sex until he performs ablution" (Abu Dawood).

Al-Albani corrected this Hadith in "Sahih al-Jami al-Sagheer wa Ziyadatuh, 3/71 No.3056" by saying it was HASAN in the checking of "Al-Targhib 1/91" [Also said to be hasan in the English translation of 'The Etiquettes of Marriage and Wedding, pg. 11]. He then makes an obvious contradiction by saying that the same Hadith was DAEEF in his checking of "Mishkatul-Masabih, 1/144 No.464" and says that the narrators are trustworthy but the chain is broken between al-hasan al-Basri and Ammar (Allah be pleased with him) as al-Mundhiri had said in al-Targhib (1/91)!!

No 25 : (* Pg. 42 No.10)
It reached Malik (Rahimahullah) that Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) used to shorten his prayer, in distances such as between Makkah and Ta'if or between Makkah and Usfan or between Makkah and Jeddah. . . .

Al-Albani has weakened it in "Mishkat, 1/426 No.1351", and then contradicts himself by saying it is SAHIH in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 3/14"!!

No 26 : (* Pg. 43 No.12)
Hadith: "Leave the Ethiopians as long as they leave you, because no one takes out the treasure of the Ka'ba except the one with the two weak legs from Ethiopia." Al-Albani has weakened this Hadith in his checking of "Mishkat 3/1495 No.5429" by saying: "The sanad is DAEEF." But then he contradicts himself as is his habit, by correcting it in "Sahihah, 2/415 No.772."

An example of al-Albani praising someone in one place and then disparaging him in another place in his books

No 27 : (* Pg. 32)
He praises Shaykh Habib al-Rahman al-Azami in the book 'Sahih al Targhib wa Tarhib, page 63', where he says: "I want you to know one of the things that encouraged me to. . . . which has been commented by the famous and respected scholar Shaykh Habib al-Rahman al-Azami" . . . . And he also said on the same page, "And what made me more anxious for it, is that its checker, the respected Shaykh Habib al-Rahman al-Azami has announced. . . ."

Al-Albani thus praises Shaykh al-Azami in the above mentioned book; **but then makes a contradiction** in the introduction to 'Adaab uz Zufaaf (The Etiquettes of Marriage and Wedding), new edition page 8', where he said: "Al-Ansari has used in the end of his letter, one of the enemies of the Sunnah, Hadith and Tawhid, who is famous for that, is Shaykh Habib al-Rahman al-Azami. . . . . For his cowardliness and lack of scholarly deduction. . . . ."

NB - (The above quotation from Adaab uz Zufaaf is not found in the English translation by his supporters, which shows that they deliberately avoided translating certain parts of the whole work).

So have a glance at this!

SELECTED TRANSLATIONS FROM VOLUME 2

No 28 : (* Pg. 143 No.1)
Hadith of Abi Barza (Allah be pleased with him): "By Allah, you will not find a man more just than me" (Sunan al-Nisai, 7/120 No.4103).

Al-Albani said that this Hadith was SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 6/105 No.6978", and then he astonishingly contradicts himself by saying it is DAEEF in "Daeef Sunan al-Nisai, pg. 164 No.287."

So beware of this mess!

No 29 : (* Pg. 144 No.2)
Hadith of Harmala ibn Amru al-Aslami from his Uncle: "Throw pebbles at the Jimar by putting the extremity of the thumb on the fore-finger." (Sahih Ibn Khuzaima, 4/276-277 No.2874)

Al-Albani acknowledged its weakness in "Sahih Ibn Khuzaima" by saying that the sanad was DAEEF, **but then** contradicts himself by saying it is SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 1/312 No.923!"

No 30 : (* Pg. 144 No.3)
Hadith of Sayyidina Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) was asked about the sexually defiled [*junubi*]. . . can he eat, or sleep. . . He said :'Yes, when this person makes wudhu.'" (Ibn Khuzaima No.217 and Ibn Majah No.592).

Al-Albani has admitted its weakness in his comments on "Ibn Khuzaima, 1/108 No.217", but then contradicts himself by correcting the above Hadith in "Sahih Ibn Majah, 1/96 No.482 "!!

No 31 : (* Pg. 145 No.4)
Hadith of Aisha (Allah be pleased with her): "A vessel as a vessel and food as food" (Nisai, 7/71 No.3957).

Al-Albani said that it was SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 2/13 No.1462", but then contradicts himself in "Daeef Sunan al-Nisai, No.263 pg. 157", by saying it is DAEEF!!!

No 32 : (* Pg. 145 No.5)
Hadith of Anas (Allah be pleased with him): "Let each one of you ask Allah for all his needs, even for his sandal thong if it gets cut."

Al-Albani said that the above Hadith was HASAN in his checking of "Mishkat, 2/696 No.2251 and 2252", but then contradicts himself in "Daeef al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 5/69 No.4947 and 4948"!!!

No 33 : (* Pg. 146 No.6)
Hadith of Abu Dharr (Allah be pleased with him): "If you want to fast, then fast in the white shining nights of the 13th, 14th and 15th."

Al-Albani declared it to be DAEEF in "Daeef al-Nisai, pg. 84" and in his comments on "Ibn Khuzaima, 3/302 No.2127", but then contradicts himself by calling it SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 2/10 No.1448" and also corrected it in "Sahih al-Nisai, 3/902 No.4021"!!

So what a big contradiction!

NB- (Al-Albani mentioned this Hadith in 'Sahih al-Nisai' and in 'Daeef al-Nisai', which proves that he is unaware of what he has and is classifying, how inept!)

No 34 : (* Pg. 147 No.7)

Hadith of Sayyida Maymoonah (Allah be pleased with her): "There is nobody who has taken a loan and it is in the knowledge of Allah. . . ." (Nisai, 7/315 and others).

Al-Albani said in "Daeef al-Nisai, pg 190": "Sahih, except for the part al-Dunya." Then he contradicts himself in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 5/156", by saying that the whole Hadith is SAHIH, including the al-Dunya part. So what an amazing contradiction!

No 35 : (* Pg. 147 No.8)
Hadith of Burayda (Allah be pleased with him): "Why do I see you wearing the jewellery of the people of hell" (Meaning the Iron ring), [Nisai, 8/172 and others. . .].
Al-Albani has said that it was SAHIH in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 5/153 No.5540", but then contradicts himself by saying it is DAEEF in "Daeef al-Nisai, pg. 230"!!!

No 36 : (* Pg. 148 No.9)
Hadith of Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him): "Whoever buys a carpet to sit on, he has 3 days to keep it or return it with a cup of dates that are not brownish in colour" (Nisai 7/254 and others).

Al-Albani has weakened it with reference to the '3 days' part in "Daeef Sunan al-Nisai, pg. 186", by saying: "Correct, except for 3 days." But the 'genius' contradicts himself by correcting the Hadith and approving the '3 days' part in "Sahih al-Jami wa Ziyadatuh, 5/220 No.5804".

So wake up (al-Albani)!!

No 37 : (* Pg. 148 No.10)
Hadith of Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him): "Whoever catches a single rak'ah of the Friday prayer has caught (the whole prayer)." (Nisai 3/112, Ibn Majah 1/356 and others).

Al-Albani has weakened it in "Daeef Sunan al-Nisai, No.78 pg. 49", where he said: "Abnormal (*shadh*), where Friday is mentioned." He then contradicts himself by saying SAHIH, including the Friday part in "Irwa, 3/84 No.622 ."

May Allah heal you!

AL-ALBANI AND HIS DEFAMATION AND AUTHENTICATION OF NARRATORS AT WILL!

No 38 : (* Pg 157 no 1)
KANAAN IBN ABDULLAH AN-NAHMY :- **Al-Albani said** in his "Sahihah, 3/481" : "Kanaan is considered hasan, for he is attested by Ibn Ma'een." Al-Albani then contradicts himself by saying, "There is weakness in Kanaan" (see "Daeefah, 4/282")!!

No 39 : (* Pg. 158 No.2)
MAJA'A IBN AL-ZUBAIR :- **Al-Albani has weakened Maja'a** in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 3/242", by saying, "This is a weak sanad because Ahmad has said: 'There is nothing wrong with

Maja'a', and Daraqutni has weakened him. . ."

Al-Albani then made a contradiction in his "Sahihah, 1/613" by saying: "His men (the narrators) are trusted except for Maja'a who is a good narrator of Hadith."

An amazing contradiction!

No 40 : (* Pg. 158 No.3)
UTBA IBN HAMID AL-DHABI :- Al-Albani has weakened him in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 5/237" by saying: "And this is a weak (Daeef) sanad which has three defects. . . . the second defect is the weakness of al-Dhabi, the Hafiz said: 'A truthful narrator with hallucinations'".

Al-Albani then makes an obvious contradiction in "Sahihah, 2/432", where he said about a sanad which mentions Utba: "And this is a good (hasan) sanad, Utba ibn Hamid al-Dhabi is trustworthy but has hallucinations, and the rest of the narrators in the sanad are trusted." !!

No 41 : (* Pg. 159 No.4)
HISHAM IBN SA'AD :- **Al-Albani said** in his "Sahihah, 1/325": "Hisham ibn Sa'ad is a good narrator of Hadith." **He then contradicts himself** in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 1/283" by saying: "But this Hisham has a weakness in memorizing"

So what an amazement!!

No 42 : (* Pg. 160 No.5)
UMAR IBN ALI AL-MUQADDAMI :- **Al-Albani has weakened him** in "Sahihah, 1/371", where he said: "He in himself is trusted but he used to be a very bad forger, which makes him undependable. . . ." **Al-Albani then contradicts himself** again in "Sahihah, 2/259" by accepting him and describing him as being trustworthy from a sanad which mentions Umar ibn Ali. Al-Albani says: "Classified by Hakim, who said: 'A Sahih Isnad (chain of transmission)', and al-Dhahabi went along with it, and it is as they have said."

So what an amazement !!!

No 43 : (* Pg. 160 No.6)
ALI IBN SA'EED AL-RAZI :- **Al-Albani has weakened him** in "Irwa, 7/13", by saying: "They have said nothing good about al-Razi." **He then contradicts himself** in another 'fantastic' book of his, "Sahihah, 4/25", by saying: "This is a good (hasan) sanad and the narrators are all trustworthy."

So beware !!!

No 44 : (* Pg. 165 No.13)
RISHDIN IBN SA'AD :- **Al-Albani said in** his "Sahihah, 3/79" : "In it (the sanad) is Rishdin ibn Sa'ad, and he has been declared trustworthy." But **then he contradicts himself** by declaring him to be DAEEF in "Daeefah, 4/53"; where he said: "And Rishdin ibn Sa'ad is also daeef." So beware!!

No 45 : (* Pg. 161 No.8)
ASHAATH IBN ISHAQ IBN SA'AD :- What an amazing fellow this Shaykh!! Al-Albani!! Proves to be. He said in "Irwa al-Ghalil, 2/228": "His status is unknown, and only Ibn Hibban

trusted him." But then he contradicts himself by his usual habit! Because he only transfers from books and nothing else, and he copies without knowledge; this is proven in "Sahihah, 1/450", where he said about Ashaath: "Trustworthy". So what an amazement!!!

No 46 : (* Pg. 162 No.9)
IBRAHIM IBN HAANI :- The honourable!! The genius!! The copier!! Has made Ibrahim ibn Haani trustworthy in one place and has then made him unknown in another. Al-Albani said in 'Sahihah, 3/426': "Ibrahim ibn Haani is trustworthy", but then he contradicts himself in "Daeefah, 2/225", by saying that he is unknown and his Ahadith are refused!!

No 47 : (* Pg. 163 No.10)
AL-IJLAA IBN ABDULLAH AL-KUFI :- Al-Albani has corrected a sanad by saying it is good in "Irwa, 8/7", with the words: "And its sanad is good, the narrators are trustworthy, except for Ibn Abdullah al-Kufi who is truthful." He then contradicts himself by weakening the sanad of a Hadith where al-Ijlaa is found and has made him the reason for declaring it DAEEF (see 'Daeefah, 4/71'); where he said: "Ijlaa ibn Abdullah has a weakness." Al-Albani then quoted Ibn al-Jawzi's (Rahimahullah) words by saying: "Al-Ijlaa did not know what he was saying ."!!!

No 48 : (* Pg. 67-69)
ABDULLAH IBN SALIH : KAATIB AL-LAYTH :- Al-Albani has criticised Al-Hafiz al-Haythami, Al-Hafiz al-Suyuti, Imam Munawi and the Muhaddith Abu'l-Fadl al-Ghimari (Allah's mercy be upon them) in his book "Silsilah al-Daeefah, 4/302", when checking a Hadith containing the narrator Abdullah ibn Salih. He says on page 300: "How could Ibn Salih be all right and his Hadith be good, even though he has got many mistakes and is of little awareness, which also made some fraudulent Hadiths enter his books, and he narrates them without knowing about them!" He has not mentioned that Abdullah ibn Salih is one of Imam al-Bukhari's men (i.e. used by al-Bukhari), because it does not suit his mode, and he does not state that Ibn Ma'een and some of the leading critics of Hadith have trusted him. Al-Albani has contradicted himself in other places in his books by making Hadiths containing Abdullah ibn Salih to be good, and here they are :-

Al-Albani said in "Silsilah al-Sahihah, 3/229" : "And so the sanad is good, because Rashid ibn Sa'ad is trustworthy by agreement, and who is less than him in the men of Sahih, and there is also Abdullah ibn Salih who has said things that are unharmful with Allah's help!!" Al-Albani also said in "Sahihah, 2/406" about a sanad which contained Ibn Salih: "a good sanad in continuity." And again in "Sahihah, 4/647": "He's a proof with continuity."

NB- (Hasan al-Saqqaf then continued with some important advice, this has been left untranslated for brevity but one may refer to the Arabic for further elaboration).

By the grace of Allah, this is enough from the books of Shaykh Saqqaf to convince any seeker of the truth, let alone the common folk who have little knowledge of the science of Hadith. If anyone is interested for hundreds of other similar quotes from Shaykh Saqqaf, then I suggest you write to the following address to obtain his book *Tanaqadat al-Albani al-Wadihat* (The Clear Contradictions of al-Albani).

THE IMAM AL-NAWAWI HOUSE
PO BOX 925393
AMMAN

JORDAN
[The cost for volume 1 is $4.00 US plus shipping and the cost for volume 2 is $7.00 plus shipping].

Allah knows best.

HERE ENDS THE QUOTATIONS FROM AL-SAQQAF

This has been just 48 selected contradictions from the works of al-Albani, as derived by Shaykh Saqqaf. During the course of my own research into al-Albani's works which have been translated into English by his followers in England, I myself came across some startling errors. I was given some publications coming from his supporters in England [Jami'at Ihyaa Minhaaj al-Sunnah]; one by the title: "Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan (according to Shaikh al-Albaanee, No's according to the English Translation of Professor Ahmad Hasan, published in 1411/1991 C.E.)", and the other by the title: "Daeef Ahadith of an-Nawawi's Riyaad-us-Saaliheen (according to the checking of Naasir ud-Deen Al-Albani, No's according to the English Translation of S. M. Madni Abbasi)".

I found some serious contradictions when I cross-referenced the above named publications; but I content myself by quoting just two of the contradictions, so that a round figure of fifty errors is achieved! Besides these errors there are others which will be displayed in the following pages, from the one who claims to be giving us the most 'authentic' Sunnah through his 'classifications of Ahadith'! The main aim in carrying out the latter exercise is for the benefit of those believers who do not and can not read the Arabic works of al-Albani for one, and secondly to give the opportunity to any doubting "Thomas"; who may or may not be one of al-Albani's supporters at the time of reading this short exposition, to actually go along and check the references I have quoted from (mainly in English). By doing this, Insha'Allah, all doubts about the authenticity of this exposition will be alleviated and the hearts of those who doubt may become content! Allah knows best.

No 49 :-
Hadith: Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reported the Apostle of Allah (Peace and blessings be upon him) as saying: "Allah and His Angels bless those who are on the right flanks of the rows (in prayer)." [See Sunan Abu Dawood, 1/676 pg. 175, English ed'n and Riyadh-us-Saliheen, 2/1094 pg. 548].

When I checked the authenticity of the above Hadith by using the list "Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan", it was not counted amongst the daeef ones, which means to the user of this list that the above Hadith is SAHIH (or at least HASAN) according to the checking of al-Albani!

But, when I found the same Hadith in Riyadh-us-Saliheen, it was declared to be DAEEF by al-Albani. The actual words used by the author of "Daeef Ahaadith of an-Nawawi's Riyadh-us-Saliheen", was:- "Al-Albaanee brings a long note. . . . . . The wording ('upon those on the right rows') is Shaadh or Munkar - the correct narration being : ('upon those who join the rows') - see Mishkaat, No.1096, 'Daeef Abi Daud', No.153. . ."!!!

NB- al-Imam Nawawi (Allah's mercy be upon him) said that the above Hadith has been cited

on the terms of Imam Muslim by Imam Abu Dawood (see the above reference in 'Riyadh').

No 50 :-
Hadith: Abu Umamah (Allah be pleased with him) says that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: "A person who did not take part in jihad or failed to equip a fighter, or did not look well after the family of a fighter, would be severely punished by Allah before the day of judgement." (Abu Dawood, 2/2497, pg. 693 and Riyadh-us-Saliheen, 2/1348, pg. 643)

When I checked the authenticity of the above Hadith by using the list 'Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan', it was not listed as being DAEEF, hence it has been declared to be SAHIH (or at least HASAN) in al-Albani's checking of Abu Dawood! But when I found the above Hadith in Riyadh-us-Saliheen, al-Albani declared it to be DAEEF. The actual words used by the author of 'Da'eef Ahaadith of An-Nawawi's Riyaad-us-Saaliheen' was: "Its isnad contains al-Waleed ibn Muslim-a-mudallis - and he has used *'an'anah* here('from. . .'). See 'at-Ta'leeq-ur-Ragheeb', 2/200."

NB- Imam an-Nawawi said that the above Hadith has been related with a Sahih isnad, besides that, according to Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arnaoot's checking of the above Hadith in his edition of Riyadh-us-Saliheen, the above Hadith is not daeef (this information has been derived from another publication of 'Jami'at Ihyaa Minhaaj al- Sunnah, by the title "List of daeef ahadiths in Riyaad-as-Saliheen according to Shuaib Arnaoutt," but as for the lists authenticity, I say: it needs to be checked). I leave you to decide whose checking you will adopt.

Now that I have quoted you 50 mistakes of al-Albani in Hadith, I wish to delve into some rather important issues of fiqh, especially by comparing al-Albani's declarations with the views of other authors! For the record let me say at the outset, that most of the opinions that I will be quoting from al-Albani are sound and acceptable to one school of fiqh or another. But if the reader may sometimes get the feeling that I have inclined too much towards one particular school, then I have only done so to defend other sound and acceptable views which have been and are still being practised by large sections of the Ummah, indifference to the views of al-Albani and others. To all of us, more than one view should be acceptable if a Mujtahid has used his personal reasoning to extract a ruling from the sources of the Shari'ah; since this was the attitude of the glorious Salaf as-Salihin (pious predecessors of the first three generations of Islam), may Allah be pleased with them all. But as for al-Albani and the generality of his supporters they have adopted the tactless way of ejecting/criticising all other ways 'unacceptable' to their deductions from the Qur'an and Sunnah as you shall see below.

Allah knows best.

Al-Albani Unveiled
Important Issues of Fiqh [Jurisprudence]
Moving the Finger in Tashahhud

With reference to al-Albani's recently translated book "The Prophet's Prayer described from the beginning to the end as though you see it (*Sifah Salah-al-Nabee*)", al-Albani claimed (pg. 66):

"Further, the Hadith that he would not move his finger does not have an authentic Isnad, as I have explained in Daeef Abi Daawood (175)."

But when I looked this Hadith up in the English Translation of the Sunan of Imam Abu Dawood (1/984, pg. 252) I found that Abdallah ibn al-Zubair (Allah be pleased with him) said :
"The Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to point with his finger (at the end of *tashahhud*) and he would not move it."
But lo and behold, this very Hadith has not been listed In "*Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan*", by his followers; which means to the user of this list that this Hadith is acceptable to them, and is either of the rank of SAHIH or HASAN to the user of this list! Imam Muslim (Rahimahullah) also reported Ibn al-Zubair (Allah be pleased with him) narrating from his father: "That when the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) sat for supplication, i.e. Tashahhud, he placed his right hand on his right thigh and his left hand on his left thigh, and pointed with his forefinger, and placed his thumb on his (middle) finger, and covered his knee with the palm of his left hand." (Sahih Muslim, 1/1202, English ed'n)

According to the Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafi'i Madhhabs, one should not continuously make supplications with the fore-finger. It is written in the English translation of Fiqh-us-Sunnah, by As-Sayyid Sabiq, (vol. 1, pg. 157): "Wa'il ibn Hajr (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) would place his left palm on his left thigh and knee. He would place the end of his right elbow upon his right thigh and would then close his right hand, forming a circle. In another narration it states, he would make a circle with his middle finger and thumb and point with his index finger, and (*wa'il*) saw him moving it to make supplications (related by Ahmad)." Explaining the Hadith, al-Bayhaqi (Rahimahullah) says, "The implication of 'he would move it' is that he would point with it, not that he would continue to move it." This would be in agreement with the narration of Ibn az-Zubair (Allah be pleased with him), who reported, "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) would point with his finger while supplicating, and he would not move it." This is related by Abu Dawud with a Sahih chain. An-Nawawi also mentioned it.

(**NB** - Both Imams al-Bayhaqi and Nawawi were great Shafi'i scholars of Hadith who followed this Hadith of Ibn al-Zubair, besides so many other scholars of Hadith).

Now, there is also a footnote (no 11) by the translator Jamal Zarabozo who said, "In his notes to Mishkat al-Masabih, al-Albani has discussed the Hadith of Wa'il ibn Hajr and of Ibn az-Zubair. He said that the first Hadith has a Sahih chain. The narrators of the latter Hadith (i.e of Ibn al-Zubair) are all trustworthy. Muhammad ibn Ijlan (a narrator in the chain going back to Ibn az-Zubair) has some weakness due to his memory, but his memory was not so poor as to drop to the rank of *hasan* (a good Hadith). Therefore, the statement recorded by Sabiq that the chain is Sahih is incorrect (i.e only if you accept al-Albani's classification of Hadith); The important words in

the latter Hadith are, *'and he would not move it*.' According to al-Albani this addition is irregular and rejected (*shadh* and *munkar*)."

And I Say: "al-Albani's followers have not said that it is *shadh* and *munkar* in their Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan !"

Again referring to Fiqh-us-Sunnah (vol. 1, pg. 158), Sabiq says: "According to the Shafiyyah, one points with the finger only once, when saying 'except Allah' in the statement bearing witness. The Hanafiyyah raise the finger in the denial part of the Statement (there is no God) and put it back down during the confirmation part (except Allah). The Malikiyyah (see below for the Maliki view) move the finger to the left and to the right until they finish the prayer. The Hanbaliyyah point with the finger every time they mention Allah, as a reflection to the oneness of Allah, and they do not move it."

Another two Hadith on this issue have been related by Imam Muslim (Rahimahullah) in his Sahih: "Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) reported that when the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) sat for the tashahhud he placed his left hand on his left knee, and his right hand on his right knee, and he raised his right finger, which is next to the thumb, making supplication in this way, and he stretched his left hand on his left knee. Another version on the authority of Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) says: When the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) sat for the tashahhud, he placed his left hand on his left knee and placed his right hand on his right knee, and he formed a ring like (Arabic number 53) and pointed with his finger of attestation. (Also) Ali ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Mu'awi reported: Abdullah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) saw me playing with pebbles during prayer. After finishing the prayer he forbade me (to do it) and said: Do as the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) used to do. I said: How did Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) do? He said that he (the Messenger of Allah) sat at tashahhud, placed his right palm on the right thigh and closed all his fingers and pointed with the help of the finger next to the thumb, and placed his palm on his right thigh." (Sahih Muslim, 1/1203-4, English ed'n)

Imam Ibn Abi Zaid al-Qairawani (d. 389 AH; Rahimahullah) who is famed with the title 'little Malik', gave the view of the Maliki Madhhab in his al-Risala (pg. 31) in the following words: "At the time a worshipper reads the tashahhud, that is the tahiyyah, he places his hands on his thighs. He then folds the fingers of his right hand, but he leaves his index finger unfolded and pointing forward with its side pointing towards his face. There are differences of opinion about the interpretation of the state of the finger. Some believe that, keeping the finger still signifies that Allah is one God. Those who shake it consider it a club with which to ward off the Satan. I consider that the interpretation of that is that it reminds the worshipper that he is in the state of prayer, and that moving the finger shall prevent him from forgetting himself. The worshipper then places his left hand on his left thigh with the palm downwards, he must not move it nor point with it."

Finally, it is written in the English translation of Umdat al-Salik wa Uddat al-Nasik - {This book gives the Shafi'i Madhhab's views} (The Reliance of the Traveller, by Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Naqib al-Misri, d. 769AH/1368 CE; Rahimahullah, trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, pg. 142, f8.44): "One does not move it while it is thus raised (Shaykh Umar Barakat said in his commentary to Umdat

al-Salik: following the Sunnah from a Hadith related by Abu Dawud. It is offensive to move it here, though some hold that it is recommended, the evidence for which is also from the Sunnah, in a Hadith related by Bayhaqi, who states both Hadiths are rigorously authenticated (Sahih). Precedence is given to the former Hadith (i.e of Ibn Az-Zubair), which negates moving the finger, over the latter Hadith, which affirms it, because scholars hold that what is sought in prayer is lack of motion, and moving it diminishes one's humility). (I say: al-Albani's comment on the Hadith of Ibn al-Zubair: 'Even if it were authentic, it is negatory, while the Hadith above is affirmatory: the affirmatory takes precedence over the negatory, as is well known among the scholars' [see pg. 66 of Sifah Salah an-Nabee] is of no consequence to what most of the Fuqaha (Jurisprudents) have said from amongst the Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali scholars, but his opinion is only supported by the Malikiyyah, so do not be confused). The Prophet's moving it was merely to teach people that it was permissible (and Shaykh Abdal-Wakil Durubi said: 'As it was the Prophet's (Peace be upon him) duty to distinguish for his Community the acts that were offensive from those that were unlawful, and he was given the reward of the obligatory for doing such offensive acts'). Moreover, Bayhaqi says that the meaning of 'moving it' in the latter Hadith is simply raising it, so there is no actual contradiction)."

From the above discussion we may briefly say in summary that al-Albani labelled the Hadith of Abdallah ibn al-Zubair as being DAEEF according to what he said in 'Sifah-Salah an-Nabee, (pg. 66), but his followers have not labelled it as being DAEEF in 'Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan'!! Also according to Jamal Zarabozo's quotation from al-Albani's checking of Mishkat ul-Masabih, this same Hadith was of the rank of HASAN, and not DAEEF as he had said in 'Daeef Abi Dawood (no 175)'; is this not a grave contradiction? We should rather accept the checking of such great memorizers of Hadith like the Imam's Bayhaqi and Nawawi (Allah's mercy be upon them).

Allah knows best.

The Placing of Hands in Prayer

With regard to the placing of the hands below the navel in Salah (see Sifah Salah an-Nabee, appendix 4, pg. 102-103, English ed'n), al-Albani has declared all the Hadith that reached him on this issue to be Daeef, due to the presence of the narrator Abdar-Rahman ibn Ishaq al-Wasiti al-Koofi. This may be true due to what the scholars of Hadith have said, but he has either overlooked the fact that there are many other Ahadith which order the placing of the hands below the navel, or has deliberately not bothered to mention them to his readers who are usually unaware of this fact! Al-Albani claims on page 12 of the same book : "To place them on the chest is what is proved in the Sunnah, and all that is contrary to it is either Daeef or totally baseless." But he contradicts himself on page 102-103 of the same book by saying: "What further points to its weakness (i.e. the Hadith of Abdar-Rahman ibn Ishaq) is that contrary to it has been narrated on the authority of Ali (Allah be pleased with him) with a better Isnad: the Hadith of Ibn Jareer al-Dabbi an (from) his father, who said, 'I saw Ali holding his left arm with his right on the wrist, above the navel (I say: The statement above the navel, does not mean on the chest, but literally above the navel and below the chest, since this is the opinion of the Shafiyyah scholars like Bayhaqi, Nawawi, Muslim and so on) - this Isnad is a candidate for the rank of HASAN; Baihaqi

(1/301) firmly designated it to be Hasan, and Bukhari (1/301) designated it with certainty while giving it an abridged, ta'leeq form."

Is this not a clear contradiction from within the same book? And this is not all my dear reader...

Al-Albani claimed that it was found in Bukhari (1/301), but when I examined the Sahih al-Bukhari (Vol. 1, Chapter. 6, no. 707, pg. 396, English ed'n), I did not find this narration of Ibn Jarir al-Dabbi (Allah be pleased with him), but instead a Hadith from Sahl ibn Sa'ad (Allah be pleased with him) who said: "The people were ordered to place the right hand on the left forearm in the prayer." Abu Hazim said, " I knew that the order was from the Prophet (Peace be upon him)." [see also Muwatta of Imam Malik, section 9.15, no 50, pg 70, English trans'n by A. Abdarahman and Y. Johnson for a very similar narration]. According to the author of Ja'al Haqq, Shaykh Ahmad Khan, there is not even one Hadith in the Sahih collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim which specify where the hands should be placed!

Now you have just read above that al-Albani classified the Hadith of Ibn Jarir al-Dabbi to be HASAN, but when I found this very Hadith in the Sunan of Abu Dawood (1/756, pg. 194, English ed'n) and cross referenced it to the list, "Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan." I found that his followers listed it as being DAEEF!! Imam Abu Dawood (Rahimahullah) said after relating the Hadith from Ibn Jarir al-Dabbi: "Sa'id ibn Jubair narrated the words: 'above the navel'. Abu Mijlaz reported the words: 'below the navel'. This has also been narrated by Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him). But that is not strong." The latter quote is one which al-Albani failed to mention in "Sifah Salah an-Nabee!"

Note also that al-Albani said with regard to the placing of the hands on the chest (see Sifah Salah an-Nabee, pg. 12, in the footnote):

"In fact, Imam Ishaq ibn Rahwaih acted on this Sunnah, as Marwazi said in 'Masaa'il (pg 222): 'Ishaq used to pray witr with us.... he would raise his hands in qunoot, and make the qunoot before bowing, and place his hands on his breast or just under his breast.'"

But when Iread the footnote to Abu Dawood's Sunan (vol. 1, pg. 194, fn. 345, English ed'n), I noticed that the author of Awn al- Mabood (1,275), Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi, claimed that both Abu Ishaq al-Marwazi and al-Hafiz Ishaq ibn Rahwaih (one of Imam al-Bukhari's teachers) held the position that the hands should be folded below the navel! In his Sahih Muslim sharif-Mukhtasar Sharh Nawawi (vol. 2, pg. 28, fn. 23), Wahid az-Zaman (a late scholar of the 'Salafiyya' in Pakistan) also affirmed that the Imam's Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifah, Ishaq ibn Rahwaih and Abu Ishaq al-Marwazi (Allah's mercy be upon them) all used to place their hands below the navel! So who do you think is quoting correctly, al-Albani or al-Azimabadi and az-Zaman?

Here is the full quote from Abu Dawood's Sunan:

"The question of folding hands in prayer below the navel is disputed amongst the jurists. According to Abu Hanifah, Sufyan al-Thawri, Ishaq ibn Rahwaih, Abu Ishaq al-Marwazi (I say: others who held the same view include the Mujtahid's like Ibrahim al-Nakhai, Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, Abu Yusuf, Muhammad al-Shaybani, Zufar ibn Hudayl and many other scholars,

Allah's mercy be upon them), the hands should be folded below the navel. This tradition is followed by them (I say: it is not just this tradition which lends support to placing the hands below the navel, but others as well). According to al-Shafi'i, the hands should be placed below the chest (I say: this is also the opinion of Imam Muslim, according to the chapter heading used by him: 'The placing of the right hand over the left hand after the first takbir in prayer below the chest and above the navel and then placing them opposite the shoulders in prostration' -see Sahih Muslim, vol. 1, pg. 220, English ed'n). Al-Nawawi says that this is the view of the majority of the jurists (this may have been in Imam Nawawi's day, but it is well known that through out the centuries of Islam in aggregate, most of the Ulama as well as the common folk have been placing their hands below the navel, by Allah's decree and will). Two statements have been attributed to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (see al-Albani's *Sifah Salah an-Nabee*, footnote on pg. 51). According to the third view ascribed to him he does not give any preference to any of these two views. One has the choice of placing the hands. Malik is also reported to have held two different views. According to the second, he held that one should leave the hands in their natural position without folding them. One should not fold them placing one on the other."

NB- The most authoritative position of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has been recorded in *al-Mudawwana al-Kubra*, by Qadi Sahnoon (d. 240 AH). This book contains the most authentic positions of al-Imam Malik and his illustrious disciples, namely Imam ibn al-Qasim and Imam ibn Wahb. Qadi Sahnoon recorded the declarations of Imam Malik directly from Imam ibn al-Qasim, hence there is no real doubt in my mind that whatever has been recorded in this book is the Madhhab of al-Imam Malik, and usually the amal (practise) of the people of Madinah in his day. In *al-Mudawwana* (vol. 1, pg. 75-76), Imam Malik has been recorded to have said, "Putting the right hand on the left in *salah*, I have no knowledge of it in the compulsory (*fard*) prayer, it is thus disliked (*makrooh*). But in the supererogatory (*nafl*) prayer there is no harm (in folding the hands), it is left to the individual to decide." This statement from Imam Malik is a strong proof against those who claim that Imam Malik only prayed with his hands at his sides, after he received a severe beating (see *The Evolution of Fiqh*, pg. 70, by A.A. Bilal Philips)!

Al-Albani has only 'checked' six Hadith which allow the placing of the hands below the navel (see his 'Sifah', pg. 102, Appx. 4). But there are more than 6 other Hadith (which allow the placing of the hands below the navel) which he has not bothered to mention/check; may be he has not come across them! One of such Hadith is very similar to what al-Albani mentioned in "Sifah Salah an-Nabee," pg. 11: "We, the company of Prophets, have been commanded to hasten the breaking of the fast, to delay the meal before the fast, and to place our right arms on our left arms during prayer [from Ibn Hibban and Diyaa', with a Sahih Isnad according to al-Albani]. The version I have is related by Sayyidina Ali (Allah be pleased with him): "Three things are from the habits of Prophethood: To hasten the breaking of the fast, to delay the Sehri (pre-fast meal) as late as possible, and to place one's right hand on top of the left hand below the navel (transmitted by Hafiz Ibn Shaheen)."

To finish, As-Sayyid Sabiq quoted Imam Tirmidhi (Rahimahullah) as saying in *Fiqh-us-Sunnah* (vol. 1, pg 132): "Knowledgeable Companions (Allah be pleased with them all), their followers and those that came after them believed that one should put his right hand over the left during prayer, while some say above the navel and others say below the navel."

Raful-Yadain : The Raising of Hands in Prayer

Another point I wish to raise concerns the long disputed issue of raising the hands in prayer (*salah*). It is a well known fact that al-Albani and the generality of people amongst the 'Salafiyya' have made a mountain out of a molehill, and have brewed a storm in a tea cup with regards to this issue, such that many of them are bold enough to accuse those who do not raise their hands in Salah (i.e. after the initial raising called Takbir-Tahrimah) of not following the Sunnah, as well as going to the disgusting length of openly detesting and despising those who do not raise their hands after the first Takbir!

I must also admit that among those who do not raise their hands in the subsequent stages of Salah, usually the ignorant people have accused those who raise the hands in the other stages of Salah to be 'Wahabbi's!' This is due to ignorance and pride of both sides, which usually stems from the lack of knowledge of the opinion of our great Mujtahid Imam's, and the Ahadith based evidences used by the research scholars in their respective defence of either raising or not raising the hands in the other stages of Salah. Our brothers and sisters who accuse those of raising the hands in the other stages of prayer should ask themselves: "Were the great Imam's like al-Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) Wahhabi's?" I pose this question because it is well known that both of the latter named Imam's used to practise Raful-Yadayn after the initial Takbir, besides many other Companions and successors (Tabi'een), may Allah be pleased with them all!

It is a well known fact from the Mutawateer Ahadith (a report of a large number of narrators whose agreement upon a lie is inconceivable) available to us, that the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) used to raise his hands when pronouncing the initial Takbir in Salah. Sayyid Sabiq stated in his Fiqh-us-Sunnah (vol. 1, pg 129): "Says Ibn al-Mundhir, 'All scholars agree that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) raised his hands at the beginning of his prayer.' Commenting upon this report, Ibn Hajar (al-Asqalani) says, 'The Prophet's raising his hands at the beginning of his prayer has been narrated by fifty companions, including the ten who were given the tidings of Paradise.' Al-Bayhaqi related that al-Hakim said, 'I do not know of any Sunnah other than this one which is accepted by the four rightly guided Khalifahs, the ten companions who were given the tidings of Paradise, and other Companions scattered across many lands." (NB-In my own experience, the only people I have met who do not raise their hands in any stage of the Salah have been the remnants of a Kharijite sect called the Ibaadiyah, nor do they fold their hands in Salah).

Now, the difference in opinion stems on the question of whether the raising of the hands is necessary in the other stages of Salah, like when going into Rukoo, standing up from Rukoo, in between the prostrations (sajdah) and when standing up for the third rakah in Salah...

Al-Albani said in "Sifah Salah an-Nabee, pg. 42, fn. 4": "The raising of the hands is reported as Mutawateer from him (Peace be upon him), as is the raising of the hands on straightening up after Rukoo. It is the Madhhab of the three Imams Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad, and of the majority of scholars of Hadith and Fiqh. Imam Malik practised it right up to his death, as reported by Ibn Asakir (15/78/2). Some of the Hanafi's chose to do it, among them Isam ibn Yusuf Abu Asamah al-Balkhi (died. 210 A.H.), a student of Imam Abu Yusuf, as has been explained in the introduction."

I wish to say to the bias of al-Albani, "You have quoted a portion of the truth correctly, but have also blundered in one of your opinions!" It is absolutely true that the great Mujtahid Imams like al-Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) recommended the raising of the hands in the other subsequent stages of Salah, but it is a mistake to say that the great Imam of Madinah, Malik ibn Anas (Rahimahullah) "practised it right up to his death" as al-Albani claims, by quoting from Imam Ibn Asakir (a Shafi'i scholar of Hadith, and a staunch defender of Imam Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari, he wrote a work entitled 'The Exposure by al-Imam Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari of Mischievous untruths, d. 571 AH; Rahimahullah).

For the real and authoritative view of Imam Malik and his followers, one must study the books written by the Maliki Madhhab, and then quote their opinions! I say this due to the sensible advice given to me by one of my friends in a written communication. He said:

"One lesson you should learn from all this is not to, for example, take Hadith from someone who is mainly specialized in Fiqh or some other subject, or take Hanafi dalils (evidences used to give legal verdicts) from someone who is not a specialist in the Hanafi madhhab's methodological bases and evidences, or take a Hanbali scholar's word about some ruling in a different madhhab, or take Hadith knowledge from scholars who make large numbers of mistakes, and so on. In general, one does not take an accounting problem to a shoe salesman."

For the most authentic view and stance of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) and his disciples please refer to the appropriate title and discussion later, but as for what al-Albani quoted from Imam Ibn Asakir (Rahimahullah), then I say the authenticity of this report needs to be checked, since al-Albani has failed to classify it himself in his "Sifah Salah an-Nabee," (does this not mean that he wants his readers to 'blindly' accept his verdicts?), and even if Hafiz Ibn Asakir's reference proves to be Sahih, then there is no doubt in my mind that this statement coming from Imam Malik must be rejected in favour of the real position of Imam Malik himself. The statements that I shall be quoting in favour of Imam Malik's authoritative opinion, comes directly from his most famous disciples, where as the reference coming from Ibn Asakir as given by al-Albani, was recorded well over 300 years after the death of Imam Malik (NB- Imam Malik passed away in the year 179 AH; while Imam Ibn Asakir was born in the year 499 AH)!

As you have read above al-Albani stated that the Imam's Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) performed Raful-Yadayn, but one should also know that on the other hand, the great Mujtahid's amongst our Pious-Predecessors, like Abu Hanifah, Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, Ibrahim al-Nakhai, Alqama, Aswad (two famous disciples of the great Companion Abdallah ibn Masood), Abu Yusuf, Muhammad al-Shaybani, Sufyan al-Thawri and many other Ulama (Allah's mercy be upon them all) did not perform Raful-Yadayn, except in the initial Takbir, based on many sound chains of narration! So you may now ask: "Why the difference of opinion?"

The answer to this small problem is simple; it is only due to preference given to the derived Ijtihad of the available Ahadith on this subject, by individual Mujtahid's of the highest scholarly rank, and not that of the laity amongst the general masses of this Ummah. Since many a scholar has said that it is impermissible to derive legal verdicts from the Qur'an and Sunnah, if one is not qualified to do Ijtihad (see the section on Taqleed), but conversely, what do we see today (see later)? The Imams who held the view that Raful-Yadayn is unnecessary, besides the initial Takbir, have based their views from many authentic Ahadith coming from the Holy Prophet

(Peace and blessings be upon him), as well as directly from the great Companions (May Allah be pleased with them all).

The fact of the matter is, that in their view the practise of performing Raful-Yadayn in the other stages of prayer have been abrogated, and hence unnecessary in performance. Contrary to this, Imam's like al-Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal.... believe it to be desirable to perform Raful-Yadayn, and in their view the practise has not been abrogated. Consequently, many of the well known and wise research scholars have said that one's Salah is correct and acceptable by the practise of either mode! So please do not fall into the abyss of ignorance, by accusing and abusing each other of performing Salah incorrectly, since it was not generally the way of our foremost Mujtahid's of the pious generations (see the discussion between Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Awzai later)!

Al-Albani has said that some of the Hanafi's like Shaykh Isam ibn Yusuf al-Balkhi (Rahimahullah) chose to perform Raful-Yadayn because he did not know the evidence of his Imams who held the view that Raful-Yadayn was unnecessary after the initial Takbir (See "Sifah Salah an-Nabee, pg xvii," and also "The Evolution of Fiqh, pg. 126", by A.A. Bilal Philips). I find it strange that Shaykh Isam ibn Yusuf did not know the evidence for not performing Raful-Yadayn, since by simple logic one can deduce the fact that he must have seen his two main Imams (Muhammad al-Shaybani and Abu Yusuf) not performing Raful- Yadayn, and hence he must have been curious enough to ask his Imams for the evidence they used for not performing Raful-Yadayn! What seems more apt in a situation like this, is to say that probably Shaykh Isam ibn Yusuf felt that the evidence for performing Raful-Yadayn was more convincing to him, than the converse evidence for not performing Raful- Yadayn, and Allah knows best.

One lesson which can be learnt from this incident, is that if Shaykh Isam ibn Yusuf was a Mujtahid within the Hanafi school, then like all other Mujtahid scholars it is incumbent on him to follow his own Ijtihad, even if it has at times contradicted the founder of the Madhhab he belonged to. Thus, Shaykh Isam had to follow his own Ijtihad. The proof for what I have just said has been agreed upon by most of the scholars who were specialized in the fundamentals (Usool) of Islam. For example, it is written in the book "Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence", by Mohammad Hashim Kamali (pg. 370): "The Ulema of Usul are in agreement that the Mujtahid is bound by the result of his own Ijtihad. Once he has deduced the ruling on a particular issue which is founded in his true conviction and belief, he may not imitate (Taqleed) other Mujtahids on that matter regardless as to whether they agree with him or otherwise. For the Mujtahid, the conclusion that he reaches is tantamount to a divine command which he must observe. It is therefore unlawful for him to abandon it or to follow anyone else in respect of it. But if he had not rendered his own Ijtihad on an issue which is not urgent, and he has time to investigate, then according to some ulema he may imitate other Mujtahid's. However, the preferred view is that he must avoid taqleed, even of one who might be more learned than him. Only the ammi (layman/non-Mujtahid's) who is incapable of Ijtihad is allowed to follow the opinion of others." (The above author has quoted from Imam Ghazzali's Mustasfa, vol.2 pg. 121; Imam Amidi's Ihkam, vol.4 pg. 204 and from al-Kassab's Adwa, pg. 119).

The above quote clears some of the misconceptions held by some people on the role of Mujtahid's in Islam. For example, some people who try to refute the Taqleed of the Mujtahid's,

bring forward examples in which the disciples of the four main Imams contradicted the Ijtihad of their Master's on certain points. These people should always remember that if a disciple contradicts the opinion of his master, then this is the result of the natural prerogative bestowed upon him, when he attained the high and honourable grade of Ijtihad. There is a well known story related from the great Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150 AH; Rahimahullah), who said: "I follow the book of Allah, and if I find no solution there, I follow the Sunnah of The Prophet (peace be upon him). If I find no solution in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah, I follow whichever of the pronouncements of the Sahabah I prefer, and leave whichever I wish. If there is a pronouncement on a particular matter by any of the Sahabah, I would not adopt any other made by any other scholar. But, if I found a solution only in the opinions of Ibrahim (al-Nakhai), al-Shabi, Ibn Sirin, Hasan al-Basri, Ata (ibn Abi Rabah) or Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyib (they were all Mujtahid's), I would make Ijtihad just as they did." (vide: "Usul al-Fiqh al-Islami," pg. 64, by Taha Jabir al-Alwani, who reported this account from Tarikh Baghdad, vol. xxxi, pg. 368, al-Intiqa of Ibn Abdal Barr, pg. 142, and Mashayikh Balkh al-Hanafiyah, pg. 190).

This report exemplifies the prerogative of a Mujtahid, as well as why Shaykh Isam ibn Yusuf may have held different opinions from his Masters. I must stress, the above discussion only refers to those who can perform Ijtihad, and not to those who are unable to fulfil the conditions recognized by the scholars of Usool for carrying out the duties of a Mujtahid. Those who are not Mujtahid's are bound to the opinions of qualified Mujtahid's, and this is Taqleed.

Al-Albani said in 'Sifah Salah an-Nabee', (pg. 105-6): "About raising the hands on going into Ruku and rising from it, many Ahadith have been narrated from the Prophet (Peace be upon him): they are actually mutawateer in the eyes of the scholars; in fact, raising the hands with every takbir is proven on his authority in many Ahadith; whereas not raising the hands is not authentically related from him except once via Abdallah ibn Masood (Allah be pleased with him), but this is not suitable for putting into practise, for it is naaf (negatory). It is firmly established, in the eyes of the Hanafi's and others, that the muthbit (affirmatory) takes precedence over the naaf (negatory); this is even when the affirmatory is on its own, let alone the case when it is a multitude of narrations, as in this issue! On the basis of this principle, and in the absence of anything contrary, this renders it binding on them to adopt the raising of the hands, and not to stick zealously to the Madhhab after the establishment of proof. However, it is a pity that only a handful of the earlier or later ones have adopted it, so much so that not raising the hands has become a land mark for them!"

The above quote shows the limited and superficial knowledge of al-Albani, in the evidences used by the Hanafi scholars for not performing Raful-Yadayn! It is true that the Ahadith confirming Raful-Yadayn are Mutawateer, but what the reader should also know, is that not performing it has also come down to us in a Mutawateer way! In fact there are more than 50 Ahadith proving the converse of what the "great scholar," al-Albani holds, as well as those who bolster his claims!

Al-Albani claims that not raising the hands has come to us authentically only, "once through Abdallah ibn Masood, but this is not suitable for putting into practise." To which I reply, why should it not be possible to put into practise the Hadith related by the great Companion Ibn

Masood (Allah be pleased with him)? Did he (Allah forbid) lie or fabricate from the Prophet (Peace be upon him)?

Please do not forget that there are many other authentic Ahadith to back up the opinion of the Hanafi's (and Maliki's)! Al-Albani only explains this Hadith of Ibn Masood away by bringing in the jurisprudential principle of, "the affirmative takes precedence over the negatory", but his argument is fallacious in this case, since I have already said that the Hanafi's believe that the performance of Raful-Yadayn has been abrogated by many other Ahadith, hence the above principle is inapplicable in this case! He claims the Hadith from Ibn Masood (Allah be pleased with him) has been only related authentically once. I say this is incorrect, and only due to his ignorance of all the available routes (Asanid) coming from Ibn Masood. As far as I know he has not listed the Hadith of Ibn Masood to be Daeef, in his checking of Imam Abu Dawood's Sunan, since his followers have not recorded it in their, "Daeef Ahadith of Abu Dawud's Sunan".

The Hadith in question is from Alqamah (Rahimahullah), who said: "Abdallah ibn Masood (Allah be pleased with him) said :'Should I pray in the way the Apostle of Allah (Peace be upon him) had performed it?' He said: 'He prayed, raising his hands only once.'" [Abu Dawood, 1/747, pg. 193, English ed'n]. Since it has not been listed in the above mentioned publication, this means that the above narration is either Sahih, or at least Hasan to the user of the list.

Note also, according to Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi, in his book Awn al-Mabood (1,272-73), the above Hadith was regarded to be Hasan by Hafiz Ibn Ma'een (Rahimahullah), and it is well known that Imam Tirmidhi (Rahimahullah) rated it to be Hasan (see Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 2/257, pg. 40-41, edited by Ahmad Muhammad Shakir).

The above Hadith has been related from Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah (Rahimahullah), through an absolutely SAHIH chain (all the narrators given below were well known Mujtahid's and absolutely truthful), and here it is: Imam Abu Hanifah (Rahimahullah) has related to us from his teacher, Imam Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman (Rahimahullah), who related from his teacher, Imam Ibrahim al-Nakhai (Rahimahullah), who related from his two teachers Imam Alqamah and Imam Aswad (Allah's mercy be upon them), the two distinguished pupils of Ibn Masood (Allah be pleased with him), who related from Ibn Masood (Allah be pleased with him), who related from the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him). The reference for this is given after the discussion between Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam al-Awzai (Allah's mercy be upon them), please see below. So my dear reader, I have just proven to you that the Hadith from Ibn Masood has come to us authentically, through at least two authentic routes, as given above. Can you now believe in al-Albani's assertion that it has only come through one authentic narration?

As for al-Albani saying, "However, it is a pity that only a handful of the earlier or later ones (i.e. Hanafi's) have adopted it, so much so that not raising the hands has become a landmark for them!" I say this statement is due to his ignorance, lack of scholarly deduction and knowledge of the principles and proofs held by the Hanafi's! He claims that it has become a "landmark", for the Hanafi's only! I say, "O 'Shaykh', have you not contradicted yourself by admitting that others besides the Hanafi's do not raise their hands in Salah in the same book?" Here is al-Albani's admission that it is not just the Hanafi's who have made it a "landmark"; he said in "Sifah Salah an-Nabee," (footnote to pg 91): "The Ibaadiyyah have distorted this hadeeth: their scholar Rabee'

has related it in his unreliable Musnad with a different wording to justify their view that raising the hands with takbeer invalidates the Prayer! That wording is false, as I have explained in ad-Da'eefah (6044)."!!! This by Allah, is a grave contradiction from within the same book, and tantamount to his admission that besides the Hanafi's, the Ibaadiyyah sect do not also raise their hands! In fact we have on record some scholars who initially used to perform Raful-Yadayn, but later on in their lives they stopped performing it altogether, except for the initial Takbeer; when they had taken into account all the arguments and evidence. Two of such great scholars are as follows:-

(A) Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi (d. 321 AH; Rahimahullah):

He was a Mujtahid in specific issues (Mujtahid fi al-Masa'il) and also the famous author of the work 'Al-Aqeeda al-Tahawiyya' (The Muslim Belief According to al-Tahawi), which has been translated into English by two different organisations, and many other works on Hadith. He was originally a Shafi'i scholar who gained mastery in Shafi'i Fiqh from his famous uncle Imam al-Muzani (Rahimahullah) [mentioned in Sifah Salah an-Nabee, pg. xvi], who was the famous disciple of Imam al-Shafi'i (Rahimahullah). But later in his life he joined the Hanafi school and hence stopped performing Raful-Yadayn indifference to the Shafi'i view of performing it. Imam Tahawi lived in a time when most of the Hadith had been collected (after Bukhari, Muslim etc), hence he had an ideal opportunity to sift through the Hadith on Raful-Yadayn and he came to the conclusion that Imam Abu Hanifah's (Rahimahullah) view point was more convincing to him, and in this regard he quoted some Hadiths negating the practise of Raful-Yadayn in some of his works.

(B) Imam Muhammad Amin ibn Abidin (d.1252/1836; Rahimahullah):

He was also originally a Shafi'i scholar who changed his school and became the foremost Hanafi Imam of his time. Hence he also changed his original opinion of performing Raful-yadayn, to not performing it. His most famous work is 'Hashiya Radd al-Mukhtar'. Al-Albani has quoted from him in 'Sifah Salah an-Nabee' (pg's viii, xvii).

The View of Imam Malik and his Madhhab on Raf-ul-Yadayn

I have already quoted the opinion of al-Albani with regard to his quotation from Imam ibn Asakir. Al-Albani has claimed that Imam Malik used to perform Raful-Yadayn right upto his death. But this is in direct contradiction to what has been related from Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) by his famous disciple, Imam ibn al-Qasim. The foremost book of the Maliki Madhhab in terms of Fiqh is a book called 'Al-Mudawwanah' (A Book of Legal Cases).

It is a recension of Qadi Sahnoon (Rahimahullah), containing his questions, answered by Imam Ibn al-Qasim (Rahimahullah). These answers repeat the literal words of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) by occasional personal interpretation of Ibn al-Qasim himself. It is written in "al-Mudawwanah", (vol. 1, pg. 71): "Imam Malik has said that he does not know of Raful-Yadayn being done in any Takbeer, even when going into (Rukoo) or rising from it, except in the Takbeer Tahrimah (the initial Takbeer), then ibn al-Qasim said that in the opinion of Imam Malik the performance of Raful-Yadayn was Daeef (a weak practice)."

The diligent reader may have noticed that Imam Malik has quoted two Hadith which seems to support the practice of performing Raful- Yadayn, in his celebrated al-Muwatta! The Hadith

quoted is as follows, "Yahya related to me from Malik from Ibn Shihab from Salim ibn Abdullah from Abdullah ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with them) that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to raise his hands to the level of his shoulders when he began the prayer and when he raised his head from ruku he raised them in the same way, saying, 'Allah hears whoever praises him, our Lord and praise belongs to You.' He did not raise them in sujud (prostration)." Also, "Yahya related to me from Malik from Nafi that Abdullah ibn Umar used to raise his hands to the level of his shoulders when he began the prayer and when he raised from the ruku he would raise them less than that." (see Muwatta section 3.4, no. 17 and 21, pg. 27, trans. by A. Abdarahman and Y. Johnson). The above Hadith has also been related by Imam's Bukhari and Muslim in their respective collections, besides many other books of Hadith with slight variations in wording and description.

The above Hadith has been one of the main proofs used to prove the performance of Raful-Yadayn by some great scholars. But, the Hanafi and Maliki schools put forward some of the following arguments to explain their contention.

The Imam Abu Dawood (Rahimahullah) reported a Hadith very similar to the one above, he said that Imam Nafi said on the authority of Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) that when he began his prayer, he uttered the Takbeer (Allah is most great) and raised his hands; and when he bowed (he raised his hands); and when he said: "Allah listens to him who praises Him," (he raised his hands); and when he stood up at the end of two rak'ahs, he raised his hands. He (Ibn Umar) traced that back to the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him). Abu Dawood then said: "What is correct is that the tradition reported by Ibn Umar does not go back to the Prophet (may peace be upon him)." Abu Dawood then said: "The narrator Baqiyyah (found in the Isnad) reported the first part of this tradition from Ubaid Allah and traced it back to the Prophet (may peace be upon him); and the narrator al-Thaqafi reported it from Ubaid Allah as a statement of Ibn Umar himself (not from the Prophet). In this version he said: 'When he stood at the end of two rak'ahs he raised them up to his breasts. And this is the correct version." Abu Dawood then said: "This tradition has been transmitted as a statement of Ibn Umar (and not of the Prophet) by al-Layth ibn Sa'ad, Malik,Ayyub, and Ibn Juraij; and this has been narrated as a statement of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) by Hammad ibn Salamah alone on the authority of Ayyub. Ayyub and Malik did not mention his raising of hands when he stood after two prostrations, but al-Layth mentioned it in his version. Ibn Juraij said in his version: I asked Nafi, "Did Ibn Umar raise (his hands) higher for the first time?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Point out to me. He then pointed to the breasts or lower than that.'" (see Sunan Abu Dawood, 1/740, pg. 191, English ed'n).

Now, the Hadith related by Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) stated that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) "used to" perform Raful-Yadayn; although Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) quoted this particular Hadith it does not necessarily mean that he himself, as well as Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) performed Raful-Yadayn! In fact we have to remember that Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet (Peace be upon him), "used to" perform Raful-Yadayn. I say this because we have many other Ahadith which have been related from Abdullah Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) himself which prove that he did not always perform Raful-Yadayn, as well as indicating that the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) himself stopped performing Raful-Yadayn; but Allah knows best! Here follows a few of these Ahadith from Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him):- (A) The Imam of Hadith, Abu Awaanah

(Rahimahullah) related in his "Sahih" (vol. 2, pg. 90) from Sufyan ibn Uyayna, who related from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, who related from Salim ibn Abdullah, who related from his father Abdullah ibn Umar, who said: "I saw the Prophet (Peace be upon him) raise both his hands up to the shoulders when starting Salah, but he did not raise his hands when going into rukoo, or when rising from it; not even between the prostrations (sujud)."

(B) The Imam of Hadith and teacher of Imam al-Bukhari, Abdullah Ibn Zubair al-Humaidi (Rahimahullah) related in his "Musnad" (2/614, pg. 277) from Sufyan ibn Uyayna, who related from Ibn Shihab al- Zuhri, who related from Salim ibn Abdullah, and he from his father Ibn Umar: "I saw the Prophet (Peace be upon him) raise both his hands at the beginning of Salah up to his shoulders, but when going into Rukoo and when raising his head from rukoo he did not raise his hands, not even between the prostrations."

(C) The Hanafi scholar of Hadith, Imam Yusuf al-Zaylai (d. 762 AH; Rahimahullah) quoted in his book "Nasb ar-Rayah" (vol. 1, pg. 404), a narration from Abdallah ibn al-Kharraz, who related from Imam Malik, who related from Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, and he from Salim ibn Abdallah, who related from Ibn Umar, who said: "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) raised his hands when beginning Salah, and he never repeated again."

(D) The two well known scholars of Hadith, Imam Tahawi and Imam Ibn Abi Shaybah (Allah's mercy be upon them), related that Imam Mujahid (the disciple of Ibn Abbas; Allah be pleased with them) said: "I prayed many times behind Ibn Umar, but he raised his hands only once at the beginning." (see Ja'al Haqq, pg. 55, by Mufti Ahmad Y. Khan)   These four narrations give strong evidence in favour of the Hanafi and Maliki views that Raful-Yadayn has been abrogated. So now ask yourselves, "Can the opinions of al-Albani be relied upon, if he does not base his opinions from the books of the Hanafi and Maliki Schools, plus the proofs used by them for not performing Raful-Yadayn?"

Now, I leave it to you to decipher for yourself, why certain Imams decided to perform Raful-Yadayn and others not to; but before I finish on this issue let me relate to you a famous incident that took place between the Imam's Abu Hanifah and al-Awzai (Allah's mercy be upon them) of Syria, when they met in Makkah. The purpose of the following debate is to show that even though the two great Imams had different narrations to prove their particular opinions, they did not abuse or despise each other in the derogatory way that some of us have become accustomed to! Insha'Allah, we should respect each others opinions, if it has a sound basis from the sources of the Shari'ah.

Imam al-Awzai said, "Why do you not raise your hands just before rukoo and after?" Imam Abu Hanifah replied, "There is no recorded word or action of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), to authenticate this (any longer)." "How so", replied al-Awzai, "When al-Zuhri has reported this to me on the authority of Salim and that of his father (ibn Umar) who said that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to raise his hands at the beginning of the Salah and before and after rukoo?" Abu Hanifah also reported, "Hammad related to me through Ibrahim, through Alqamah, through al-Aswad, and through ibn Masood, that the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), only raised his hands at the beginning of the Salah and did not repeat this action again." Al-Awzai then suggested that his authorities were more reliable than those of Abu

Hanifah, who countered, "Hammad was more knowledgeable than al-Zuhri, and Ibrahim was more knowledgeable than Salim. And if Ibn Umar is to be credited as a Companion of the Prophet, then al-Aswad has many merits. And the merits of Abdullah ibn Masood speak for themselves." At this, al- Awzai remained silent. (Vide: 'The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam', pg. 59-60, by Taha Jabir al-Alwani; also see 'Imam Abu Hanifah: Life and Work' pg. 66-67, by Shibli Numani). This incident has also been recorded with slight variations by Hafiz Ibn al-Humam in his 'Fath al-Qadir', and Shah Waliullah Dehlawi's 'Hujjat Allah al-Baligha'. Allah knows best.

The Abrogation of Performing Prayer Sitting: Behind a Sitting Imam

Al-Albani stated in *'Sifah Salah an-Nabee'* (pg. 4):

"He (Peace be upon him) prayed sitting during the illness of which he died. He also prayed sitting on another occasion before that, when he was injured, and the people behind him prayed standing; so he indicated to them to sit, so they sat (and prayed). When he finished, he said, You were going to do as the Persians and the Romans do : stand for their kings who sit. So do not do so, for the Imam is there to be followed : When he makes ruku, make ruku, when he rises, rise, and when he prays sitting, pray sitting (all of you)." (See Sahih Muslim, 1/824, pg. 227, English ed'n).

The above statement made by al-Albani seems to indicate his lack of knowledge about the Hadiths on this rare issue; or to be safe we may say that again he has given us half of the 'story'. According to Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (Rahimahullah), the above command is concerned with the earlier period when the present mode of prayer was made obligatory. The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) stressed this point with a view to effacing out of the minds of his people the undue respect and reverence which the neighbouring people of Persia and Rome showed to their kings. They kept standing before them in all humility and dared not sit down before them. The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not approve of this type of respect which is against the dignity of man. He, therefore, in contravention of the practises amongst the Romans and the Greeks, ordered them to sit down when the Imam was sitting and not to observe this type of ceremonious respect. But when the sense of human dignity and equality took hold of the minds of the Muslims, then this practise was abrogated and the Muslims were permitted to say their prayer standing behind a sitting Imam, when there is no valid reason for it, as standing in prayer is part of prayer and it should not be abandoned in normal circumstances (Hujjatullah-al-Baligha, vol. 2, pg. 27, quoted in the English translation of Sahih Muslim, vol. 1, fn. 633, pg. 227).

The proof against al-Albani's opinion is found in the Sahih collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim; and it is of greater authority as evidence than the Hadith quoted by al-Albani. I say: so much for al-Albani giving his followers the most authentic Sunnah, when he himself has contradicted the authentic Sunnah by not realising that his opinion has been clearly abrogated by a later practise of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him)! Imam Muslim has a chapter heading titled: 'The Imam is authorised to appoint one as his deputy when there is a valid reason for it (for example, illness or journey or any other), and if an Imam leads the prayer sitting as he cannot do so standing, his followers should say prayer standing provided they are able to do it and there is an abrogation of saying prayer sitting behind a sitting Imam.' (see Sahih Muslim, vol. 1, pg. 228, English ed'n).

The actual Hadith that proves our point is found in a long narration reported from Ubaidullah ibn Abdullah ibn Utba (Rahimahullah) from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her); the most important part of the Hadith is as follows: "Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) was leading the people in prayer. When Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) saw him (the Prophet, peace be upon him), he began to withdraw, but the Apostle of Allah (Peace be upon him) told him not to withdraw. He told his two (companions) to seat him down beside him (Abu Bakr). They seated him by the side of Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) said the prayer standing while following the prayer of the Apostle (Peace be upon him) and the people said prayer (standing) while following the prayer of Abu Bakr. The Apostle (Peace be upon him) was seated." (for full Hadith see Muslim, 1/832, pg. 228-229 and Bukhari, 1/655, pg. 371-372)

NB - Imam Bukhari (Rahimahullah) said, "The Imam is appointed to be followed. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) in his fatal illness led the people in prayer while he was sitting (and the people were standing)...." (see Bukhari vol. 1, chapter 51, pg. 370, English ed'n).

Imam al-Bukhari (Rahimahullah) also quoted Imam al-Humaidi (Rahimahullah) as saying: "The saying of the Prophet (Peace be upon him): 'Pray sitting, if he (Imam) prays sitting' was said in his former illness (during his early life) but the Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not order them to sit. We should follow the latest actions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him)" (see Bukhari, 1/657, pg. 373).

Finally, Abdul Hamid Siddiqi said in his footnotes to Sahih Muslim (vol. 1, footnote 632, pg. 226): "According to Imam Awzai and Imam Malik, this mode is essential in offering (i.e according to al-Albani's opinion). Imam Shafi'i and Imam Abu Hanifah (as well as al-Bukhari, Muslim and many others) are of the opinion that it is not advisable to say prayer sitting behind an Imam who has not been obliged to say prayer in a sitting posture due to illness or some other reason..." But according to Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi in Awn al-Ma'bood (1,233-234), Imam Malik does not allow anyone to lead the prayer sitting! (see Abu Dawood, vol. 1, fn. 266, pg. 159 English ed'n).

Going into Prostration (Sajud): Hands or Knees First?

Al-Albani is of the firm opinion that when one goes into Sajdah, he or she should place his hands onto the ground before his knees. He stated in 'Sifah Salah an-Nabee' (pg. 52): "He (the Prophet, peace be upon him) used to place his hands on the ground before his knees." Then al-Albani said in the footnote of the same page (pg. 52, fn. 2): "Ibn Khuzaimah (1/76/1), Daraqutni and Hakim, who declared it Sahih and Dhahabi agreed. All the Ahadith which contradict this are inauthentic. This way has been endorsed by Malik, and similar is reported from Ahmad in Ibn al-Jawzi's al-Tahqeeq (108/2). Also, al-Marwazi quoted with a Sahih isnad, Imam al-Awzai in his Masaa'il (1/147/1) as saying: 'I found the people placing their hands before their knees.' Then al-Albani continued on the same page: "He used to instruct likewise, saying: When one performs Sajdah, he should not kneel like a camel, but should place his hands before his knees" (related by Abu Hurayra, see Abu Dawood, 1/839, pg. 215 English ed'n).

Al-Albani has quite categorically claimed that the Ahadith which prove that one should place one's knees down before one's hands are all 'Inauthentic' according to his 'classification'

standards. But as usual when there seems to be 'contradictory' Ahadith, al-Albani fails to tell his readers that many other scholars of Hadith and even the Mujtahid Imams like Abu Hanifah and al-Shafi'i (Allah's mercy be upon them) are indifference to his view of placing the hands on the ground before the knees!

In fact Sayyid Sabiq said in Fiqh-us-Sunnah (vol. 1, pg. 151): "Most scholars prefer that one place his knees on the floor before his hands. Ibn al-Mundhir related this from Umar (ibn al-Khatab), an-Nakhai, Muslim ibn Yasar, Sufyan al-Thauri, Ahmad (ibn Hanbal, according to one of two views reported from him), Ishaq (ibn Rahwaih) and other jurists including Ibn al-Mundhir himself. Abu at-Tayyeb said that most jurists agree with this. Ibn al Qayyim (al-Jawziyya, the disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah) said: 'When the Prophet, upon whom be peace, prayed, he would place his knees (on the floor) before his hands, then his hands, his forehead and nose. This is what is authentic and has been related by Shuraik from Asim ibn Kaleeb on the authority of his father from Wa'il ibn Hajr (Allah be pleased with him) who said: I saw the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, while prostrating, place his knees (on the floor) before his hands. Upon getting up, he would raise his hands before his knees. I never saw him do otherwise.'" (see Abu Dawood, 1/837-838, pg. 215).

Sayyid Sabiq then gave the opinion of Malik, al-Awzai, Ibn Hazm and Ahmad (according to his other opinion) whose opinions coincide with al-Albani's.

The Hadith from Wa'il ibn Hajr and Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with them) can also be found in the English translation of Mishkat- ul-Masabih (see vol. 2, no's 898-899, pg. 172) where it says: "Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi (d. 388/998; Rahimahullah) said that the tradition of Wa'il ibn Hajr is more sound than this (i.e the Hadith of Abu Hurayra) and it is also said that it is an abrogated one (i.e the Hadith of Abu Hurayra). Also the author of Awnal-Ma'bood (vol 1, 311-312), Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi said in his commentary to Abu Dawood; after quoting the opinions held by some scholars that the hands should be placed before the knees: "But al-Khattabi is of the opinion that the tradition of Wa'il ibn Hajr is better established because it is supported by several other sound traditions (which have not been quoted by al-Albani). Ibn Khuzaimah (a Shafi'i scholar of Hadith, d. 311/924; Rahimahullah) observes that the tradition of Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) has been abrogated. He reports a tradition on the authority of Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas (Allah be pleased with him): We used to place our hands (on the ground) before our knees, but later on we were commanded to place our knees before our hands!" The Hadith of Wa'il ibn Hajr is also found in Imam Tirmidhi's Sunan, where Imam Tirmidhi said that the Hadith was Hasan Gharib (see Sunan al-Tirmidhi, 2/268, edited by Ahmad Shakir). The author of Awn al-Ma'bood also said: "Abu Hanifah, al-Shafi'i and Ahmad (according to his second view) maintain that one should place his knees before his hands. And this seems to more convenient (see Sunan of Abu Dawood, vol. 2, fn. 383-384, pg. 215 English ed'n)."

Al-Albani Unveiled
TARAWEEH PRAYER
8 OR 20 RAK'AHS?
by Ahmed ibn Muhammad

In a handout by al-Albani's followers in England, by the title "**Some common questions answered**" (dated October 1990), there appeared the following question and answer (No. 22):

(a) Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) reports that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) never prayed more than 8 *rak'aats* in *taraweeh*, so how come nobody disapproves of 20?(b) Is it true that Umar (Allah be pleased with him) introduced it?

Ans. 22
(a) As regards the *taraweeh* prayer - people agree that the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the best way is 11 *rak'aats*. As regards any addition - then this is DISAPPROVED of and DECLARED AS A BID'AH (A bad innovation) by Shaykh al-Albani and by a few earlier scholars - that being reported from Imam Malik, Ibn ul-Arabee and as-San'aanee (see *Salat-ut-taraweeh* of Shaykh al-Albani).

(b) It is not true that Umar (Allah be pleased with him) either prayed or ordered 20 *rak'aats*. Rather he ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b to lead the people with 11 *rak'aats* (*al-Muwatta* 1/137, with a Sahih Isnad).

I do not wish to go into much detail on this issue, but *Insha'Allah* a separate publication is what is really required, to show which opinion is the most correct. But any way it should be said that the vast MAJORITY of the scholars of hadith, Fiqh, and even the four Mujtahid Imams are in agreement that 20 *rak'ahs* are the most appropriate, followed by 3 *rak'ahs* of *witr*, and this is also the opinion of the Imam of the "Salafiyya", Ahmad ibn Taymiyya!

First, it should be said that the hadith reported from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) about 11 *rak'ahs* is not at all to do with *tarawee*, according to the majority of scholars, but in fact concerns the number of *rak'ahs* of TAHAJJUD prayer! The hadith in question is as follows:-

Narrated Abu Salama ibn Abdur Rahman that he asked Aisha (Allah be pleased with her), "How was the prayer of Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) in Ramadan?" She replied, "He did not pray more than eleven *raka'at* in Ramadan or in any other month. He used to pray four *raka'at* - let alone their beauty and length - and then he would pray four - let alone their beauty and length - and then he would pray three *rak'aat* (*witr*)." She added, "I asked, 'O Allah's Apostle! Do you sleep before praying the *witr*?' He replied, 'O Aisha, My eyes sleep but my heart does not sleep.'" (*Bukhari*, 3/230, English edn)

According to the author of "*Fatawa Rahimiyyah*", Mufti Abdur Rahim Lajpuri (vol. 1, pg. 275); in his defence of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh:*

"The commentator of *al-Sahih al-Bukhari* and the erudite traditionist, Shaykh Shamsud-Din al-Kermani (d. 786 AH; Rahimahullah) said: 'In the hadith (above), the *tahajjud* prayer is meant. Abu Salama's question and Hadrat Aisha's answer concerned the *tahajjud*.' He adds further: **'If the *tahajjud* prayer is not meant, then this tradition will be at variance with the tradition that states that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty *rak'ahs* each for two nights, and in the case of such clash the tradition of twenty *rak'ahs* which is affirmative (*muthbit*) shall have precedence because according to the**

principles of hadith, the affirmative takes precedence over the negative (*naaf*)" (vide: *Al-Kawakib ud-Durari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 9, pg 155-156). I say, does this not mean that people who perform 8 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, should pray 20 *rak'ahs* instead? Since according to the principles of hhadith (as affirmed by al-Albani), **"The affirmative takes precedence over the negative in certain cases."**

A great fact that should also be noted by the reader is that the Imam's of hadith have placed the hadith from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) under the section of *tahajjud* prayers, which indicates their belief that the hadith applies to *tahajjud* only. The Imam al-Muhaddithin al-Bukhari (Rahimahullah) has placed the hadith from Aisha under at least two sections of his *Sahih*, first under the section of '21: The *tahajjud* Prayer at Night' (see *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, chapter 15, no. 248, English ed'n) and then under the section of '32: The Book of *taraweeh* Prayers' (see *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 3/230, pg. 128 English ed'n). This means that Imam Bukhari believed that the prayer mentioned by Aisha was that of tahajjud only, and since the tahajjud prayer is performed also in Ramadan, then Imam Bukhari also quoted the same hadith under 'The book of *taraweeh* prayers', but Allah knows best. Imam Muslim (Rahimahullah) has also placed the hadith from Aisha under the tahajjud prayer section (see Sahih Muslim 1/1607, pg. 356, English ed'n). Also Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has placed Aisha's hadith under the Book of tahajjud (see Al-Muwatta, Book 7, section 7.2, no. 9, pg. 5, English ed'n). The Imam Abu Dawood (Rahimahullah) has also placed the same hadith under the chapter 'On the number of *rak'ahs* of the prayer at night (tahajjud)' (see Abu Dawood 1/1336, pg. 351, English version). Even Imam's Tirmidhi and Nisai (Allah's mercy be upon them) placed Aisha's hadith under the tahajjud section (see Tirmidhi, vol. 1, pg. 58 and Nisai, vol. 1, pg. 154). Even one of the most prominent Imams of the 'Salafiyya', Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya placed the aforementioned hadith in the section of tahajjud prayers in his book Zaad al Ma'ad (vol. 1, pg. 86)!

Mufti Abdur Rahim said about Aisha's hadith: "And if this tradition may have been quoted in some book under the devotions of Ramadan along with the *taraweeh*. Like the *taraweeh*, the tahajjud, too, is a prayer of Ramadan, and because of this affinity, it can be mentioned along with the *taraweeh* (as Imam Bukhari did). Hence, supposing it may have been mentioned in some book, it cannot be made thereby a categorical argument. 'When uncertainty creeps in, the argument is falsified.' Moreover, Hafiz al-hadith Imam Qurtubi's (d. 671/1273; Rahimahullah) statement regarding this hadith (of Aisha) should not be overlooked that, 'many a man of knowledge considers the aforesaid hadith mudtarib (i.e. confounded).'" (vide: Imam Ayni in his Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 2, pg. 187).

In short, the aforesaid report is in no way a proof for eight *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*. In contradistinction to this, as regards the twenty *rak'ahs* the Companions Consensus (*Ijma-as-Sahaba*) has taken place over the approval of Ibn Abbas' hadith (about 20 *rak'ahs* being performed by the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him) and practically the majority of Ulama have accepted it." (Fatawa Rahimmiyah, vol. 1, pg 276-277).

Although Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) had said: "He did not pray more than 11 Raka'at," we also have reports from her that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) also prayed more than 11 Raka'ats! The proof for this was given by her in another narration involving Abu Salama ibn Abdal Rahman (Rahimahullah). Abu Salama asked Aisha about the prayer of the Messenger of

Allah (Peace be upon him), she said, "He observed 13 Raka'ahs (in the night prayer). He observed 8 raka'ahs and would then observe (three *rak'ahs* of) *witr* and then observe two raka'ahs sitting (nafl prayer), and when he wanted to bow he stood up and then bowed down, and then he observed two raka'ahs in between the Azan and Iqama of the dawn prayer (i.e. fajr)." (See Sahih Muslim 1/1603, pg. 357 and also al-Albani's Sifah Salah an-Nabee, appendix 7, pg. 110). So does this not mean that the 'Salafiyya' should perform 13 Raka'ats of *taraweeh* in Ramadan?

Now, the statement 'the best way is 11 rak'aats' is only the opinion of a small group of the ulama, in fact there are more than 50 opinions to say that the best way is 20 *rak'ahs* according to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) practise! What is more interesting to note is that the four great Mujtahids, Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah's mercy be upon them) are in agreement that the *taraweeh* consists of twenty *rak'ahs*. The statement that Imam Malik approved of eight *rak'ahs* needs to be proved, most likely this ascription was made to him because he quoted the hadith which is used to prove eight *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* in his al-Muwatta (see Muwatta, 6.2, no. 4, pg. 48) by a small group of scholars. Although Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) quoted this hadith in his book, it has no bearing on what his actual opinion and practise was, on the contrary Imam Malik believes in thirty-six *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* (i.e. 20 *rak'ahs* and 16 *rak'ahs* of extra nafl prayers, see later for the official verdict of the Maliki Madhhab)! Also the hadith which seems to prove 11 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* (including three *rak'ahs* of *witr*) in Imam Malik's Muwatta has been explained away by many other convincing arguments.

Recently I came across a booklet by the title, "Is *taraweeh* 20 Rakaats?" (Published by Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadville, South Africa, author unknown). In this booklet the hadith quoted from the Muwatta of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah), about 11 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* (including three *witr*) was quite eloquently analysed.

The actual hadith in question was related by Yahya ibn Yahya al-Laythi, who related from his teacher Imam Malik, who related from Muhammad ibn Yusuf, who said that as-Saaib ibn Yazid said, "Umar ibn Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim ad-Dari (Allah be pleased with them) to watch the night in prayer with the people for eleven *rak'ahs*. The reciter of the Qur'an would recite the Mi'in (a group of medium sized surah's) until we would be leaning on our staffs from having stood so long in prayer. And we would not leave until the approach of dawn." (see above reference in al-Muwatta).

It was stated in the aforementioned booklet (chapter 7, pg. 20), after quoting the above narration, "If we analyse the chain (Isnad) of this hadith, we notice that Muhammad ibn Yusuf narrates from Saaib ibn Yazid. Muhammad (ibn Yusuf) has 5 students and the narration of each student differs from the next (i.e. the text of the hadith is different from each student). The five students are:

(1) Imam Malik
(2) Yahya ibn Qattan
(3) Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad
(4) Ibn Ishaq and
(5) Abdur Razzaq

Their narrations are as follows :

(1) Imam Malik says that Umar ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari to perform 11 rakaats. (What practise occurred thereafter is not mentioned, nor is Ramadaan mentioned).

(2) Yahya ibn Qattan says that Umar made the people gather with Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari and both of them began performing 11 rakaats. (Hadrat Umar's command is not mentioned, nor is any mention of Ramadaan made).

(3) Abdul Aziz (ibn Muhammad) says that we used to perform 11 rakaats in the era of Umar. (Neither is the command mentioned, nor is Ubayy ibn Ka'b or Ramadaan mentioned).

(4) Ibn Ishaq says that we used to perform 13 rakaats in Ramadaan during the era of Umar. (Neither is the command of Umar mentioned. Instead of 11 rakaats, 13 are mentioned).

(5) Abdur Razzaq says that Umar gave the command of 21 rakaats. (In this narration 21 rakaats are mentioned instead of 11).

Besides the narration of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah), 11 rakaats can not be established from the other narrations. Due to this difference, the narrator Ibn Ishaq gave preference to 13 while Ibn Abdal Barr al-Maliki preferred 21 (from the narration of Abdur Razzaq). Therefore this narration is Mudtarib (A hadith that is transmitted in different manners, so that the contents of each transmission differ, and it is not possible to give preference to any particular transmission) with regards to the number (of *rak'ahs*) and hence unacceptable.

The above was an analysis of Muhammad ibn Yusuf's narration via Saaib ibn Yazid. Now let us examine the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah via Saaib (ibn Yazid), which is mentioned in the Sunan al- Kubra of al-Bayhaqi (vol. 2, pg. 496): Abu Zi'b narrates from Yazid ibn Khaseefah, who reports from Saaib ibn Yazid that the people used to perform 20 rakaats in the month of Ramadaan during the era of Umar.

Imam Nawawi, Iraqi and Suyuti (all three were great scholars of hadith) amongst others have accepted the authenticity of this hadith (see Tuhfatul Akhyaar, pg. 192 and Irshaadus Saari, pg. 74, (by Imam al-Qastallani]).

Muhammad ibn Jafar (another narrator in the chain) has quoted the statement from Yazid (ibn Khaseefah) as Abu Zi'b (had). This narration is mentioned in Marifatus Sunan of al-Bayhaqi. Allamah Subki and Mullah Ali al-Qari have stated in Sharh Minhaaj and Sharh Muwatta respectively that the chain of narrators of this hadith are correct. (Tuhfatul Ahwazee, vol.2, pg 75).

From the above narration we can clearly see that both the students of Yazid (ibn Khaseefah), unanimously narrate the fact that during Umar's (Allah be pleased with him) era 20 rakaats was the standard practise. On the contrary, the 5 students of Muhammad ibn Yusuf quote Saaib (ibn Yazid) differently.

In such a situation the correct approach would be to rely on the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah. However the Ahl al-hadith (another name for the "Salafiyya") have unjustly discarded this narration and adopted the doubtful one of Muhammad ibn Yusuf, which has differing versions. This goes against the principles of hadith." Here ends the quote .

Another hadith that is used by the protagonists of eight *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* has been related by Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) led the people in prayer during Ramadan with 8 *rak'ahs* and the *witr*. We gathered in the Mosque the following night hoping that he would come again. We remained waiting till the next morning (until he came out). The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'I feared that the *witr* may become incumbent on you.'" (related by Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi in Qiyamul-Layl, pg. 90, al-Tabarani and Ibn Hibban - see below for the actual hadith)

The above hadith has been analysed by Shaykh Abdur Rahim in his "Fatawa" (vol. 1, pg. 278-9) with the conclusion that the hadith is Daeef. The Shaykh said: "The strange thing about this hadith is that its chain of authorities (Isnad) is not trustworthy. Please examine the statements of the Imams of this science concerning the narrators of this chain. In this chain one narrator is Ibn Hameed Razi, about whom the opinions of the great and august critics of hadith are as under:

(1) 'He is weak.' - Hafiz al-Dhahabi (see his Mizanul I'tidal, vol.3, pp. 49-50)

(2) 'He narrates many disowned (munkar) hadiths.' - Ya'qub ibn Shaybah

(3) 'He is objectionable.' - Imam Bukhari

(4) 'He is a liar.' - Abu Zur'ah

(5) 'I testify that he is a liar.' - Ishaq Kausaj

(6) 'He narrates hadiths about everything; I have not seen a man bolder than him vis-a-vis God.' - Sauleh Jazrah

(7) 'By God! He is a liar.' - Ibn Kharash

(8) 'He is not reliable.' - Imam Nisai

Now, about the second narrator, Ya'qub ibn Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi:-
(1) 'He is not strong.' - Daraqutni (see Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 3, pg. 324).
About the third narrator, Isa ibn Jariyah:-
(1) 'He has had disowned (munkar) hadiths.' - Ibn Ma'een
(2) 'His hadiths are disavowed.' - Nisai

(3) 'His hadiths are rejected (matruk).' - Nisai

(4) 'His hadiths are disavowed.' - Abu Dawood - synopsis

(5) 'He is counted among the weak.' - (see Mizanul-I'tidal, vol. 2, pg. 311, by Hafiz al-Dhahabi)." Here ends the quote.

Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (Rahimahullah) has reported a similar narration to the above hadith in his Bulugh al-Maram min Adillat al-Ahkam (no. 396, pg. 159), on the authority of Hafiz Ibn Hibban (Rahimahullah): "Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleaed with him): Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) prayed during the night in Ramadan; the people waited for him on the next day, but he did not come out; and he said, 'I feared that the *witr* might be enjoined on

you.'" Note the above narration does not even state how many *rak'ahs* were performed by the Prophet (Peace be upon him)!! The above two hadiths can not be used as justifiable proof in favour of 8 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* on their own.

Al-Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has in fact quoted a hadith which proves the performance of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* in Ramadan; and that is as follows:-

Yahya related to me from Malik that Yazid ibn Ruman said,"The people used to watch the night in prayer during Ramadaan for 23 *rak'ahs* (i.e 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, followed by 3 *rak'ahs* of *witr*) in the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab." (vide: al-Muwatta, 6.2, No. 5, pg. 48, English ed'n)

Although the above hadith is Munqati (a link is missing in the chain) and has thus been declared to be Daeef by some scholars (including al-Albani), it never the less has been used as proof. Besides, the hadith has been given a full Isnad (chain) by either Imam Ibn Abdal Barr al-Maliki (d. 463/1071; Rahimahullah) or Shaykh Muhammad Habibullah ibn Mayabi ash-Shanqiti (Rahimahullah), in their thorough research to complete all the chains of transmission (Isnad) which have an incomplete chain; as found in the Muwatta of Imam Malik!

In fact the latest edition of the English version of al-Muwatta (translated by A. A. at-Tarjumana and Yaqub Johnson) says (pg. xxxiv): "Ibn Hajar (al-Asqalani) said, 'The book of Malik is sound by all the criteria that are demanded as proofs in the *mursal*, *munqati* (two types of hadith which have a missing link) and other types of transmission.' Then as-Suyuti followed what Ibn Hajar said here; and said, 'The mursal hadith in it are a proof with him (i.e. ash-Shafi'i) as well because the mursal is a proof with us when it is properly supported. Every mursal in the Muwatta has one or more supports as will be made clear in this commentary (i.e. Suyuti's commentary on al-Muwatta called Tanwir al-Hawalik). It is absolutely correct to say that the Muwatta is sound without exception.'

Ibn Abdal-Barr collected together all the mursal, munqati and mu'addil hadiths in the Muwatta and said that the total number of hadiths in the Muwatta which do not have an Isnad are sixty one. He stated that he found the isnads of all of them in other sources with the exception of four hadiths. The erudite scholar of hadith, Shaykh Muhammad Habibullah ibn Mayabi ash-Shanqiti says in Ida'a al-Halik that he had found witnesses for these four hadith and he then mentioned these witnesses. He said, 'Some of the people of knowledge made these Isnads complete.' He mentioned from Ibn Abdal-Barr that there was no munkar(rejected) hadith in the Muwatta, nor anything fundamentally refuted."

In the light of what the erudite scholars of hadith have said above, we may emphatically state that the apparently 'munqati' hadith from Yazid ibn Ruman has a complete Isnad; hence it may be used as a proof, since Imam Ibn Abdal-Barr has said that there is, "No munkar hadith in the Muwatta nor anything fundamentally rejected." Hence, many scholars of hadith and Fiqh have used the above hadith as a proof in favour of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*.

The quote from "Some common questions answered," also claimed that, "Rather he (Umar) ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b to lead the people with 11 rakaats." I say, this is half of the truth, since it

is clearly stated in al-Muwatta :"Umar ibn Khattab ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b AND Tamim ad-Dari ....(see Muwatta, 6.2, no. 4, pg. 48)!!

Al-Albani has said that if anyone performs more than 11 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, then he or she is basically committing a Bid'ah (a very bad innovation)! We seek refuge in Allah from such a disgusting statement! Since this tantamountally means that the foremost Imams of the saved sect (al-Firqat an-Najiyyah) of Ahl-al-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah have been committing a gross innovation (Allah forbid). Al-Albani seems to be implying that the venerable Companions (may Allah be pleased with them and increase their rank), the four great Mujtahid Imams (Allah's mercy be upon them), as well as the foremost scholars of hadith and Fiqh of the last 1400 years have 'innovated' the practise of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, if considered in the light of penetrative elaboration, implicitly and covertly! What alternative conclusion can one derive, if the "Albani Madhhab" says, "As regards any addition (to 11 *rak'ahs*) - then this is disapproved of and declared as a bid'ah by 'Shaykh' al-Albani?"

I ask you, are the so called "Salafiyya" in the true path of the original and true Salaf-as-Salihin (the pious predecessors of the first three generations of Islam), when they have declared the practise of 20 *rak'ahs* to be a bid'ah, even though the Salaf have been reported to have practised 20 *rak'ahs*?

The actual hadith which states that the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him) performed 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* has been reported by Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him). He said, "Verily, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in the month of Ramadaan, used to perform 20 *rak'ahs* and the *witr* prayer (afterwards) without congregation." (Reported in al-Sunan al-Bayhaqi, vol.2, pg. 496, Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, Kabiri of Imam al-Tabarani, Ibn Aadi in his Musnad, and by Imam Baghawi in his Majmua-as-Sahabah)

Although some scholars have declared this hadith to be Daeef on its own, it does not mean that it should be whole heartedly rejected; since Daeef does not mean Maudu (fabricated). Please refer to the next section on Daeef hadiths, and when they are acceptable to scholars for further elaboration. The hadith related from Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) is supported by many other narrations coming from great Companions like Uthman, Ali, Ibn Masood...(Allah be pleased with them all), as well as their successors (Tabi'in). Besides, some of the scholars of hadith have even declared some weak Ahadith to be Sahih, if it has a firm basis. It was stated in the book "Criticism of hadith among Muslims with reference to Sunan Ibn Maja," (pg. 131, by one of the leading "Salafi" Shaykhs in Britain, Suhaib Hasan): "Shafi'i also recognises a weak hadith as authentic (sahih) if it is found to be accepted by the whole Ummah (see al-Sakhawi: Fath al-Mugith). But he does not accept Malik's view of restricting the practise to the people of Madinah. According to the later scholars of the Hanafi school like Ibn al-Humam, a hadith will be declared Sahih, if it is supported by the practise of the Ummah (see Abdal Rashid Nu'mani: Ma tamusu ilaihe al-Haja, pg. 18). Among traditionalists, Tirmidhi often remarks, after quoting a less authentic hadith: 'It is being practised by the people of learning (Ahl al-Ilm).' Suyuti deduces: 'It indicates that the hadith is supported by the sayings of the people of learning. More than one scholar has said that a hadith is declared Sahih if supported by the sayings of the people of learning, even if it lacks a proper Isnad (see Suyuti: al-Ta'aqubat, folio 20)."

As stated above, the great research scholar (Muhaqqiq) Hafiz Kamal ibn al-Humam (d. 861/1457; Rahimahullah) had actually said: "One of the factors from which the authenticity of a hadith is known is that the learned (Ulama) may conform to it, which is a proof of its being sound (vide: Fath al-Qadir, vol. 3, pg. 349).

There are many quotes from scholars which prove a near universal juridical acceptance of 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, but I content myself by quoting a select few from some of the foremost scholars of the Ahl-as-Sunnah, as well as the Imam of the "Salafiyya" (when it suits their whims and desires), Ahmad ibn Taymiyya.

(1) Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852/1449; R.A.)

The Hafiz of hadith, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani has reproduced from Imam Rafi'i (Allah's mercy be on him):

"For two nights the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty *rak'ahs* of prayer each night; on the third night the people gathered but the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not come out. Then the next morning, he told the people, 'It so occurred to me that it would be made obligatory for you, and you would not be able to discharge this obligation.'"

After reproducing this tradition, Hafiz Ibn Hajar said:
"All the traditionalists (Muhaddithin) are unanimous about the soundness of this report." (see Talkhis al-habir fi takhrij ahadith al-Rafi'i al-Kabir, vol. 1, pg. 119, by Hafiz ibn Hajar).
(2) Imam al-Azam Abu Hanifah (d. 150 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was stated in Fayd ul-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari (by Shaykh Anwar Shah Kashmiri):

"Imam Abu Yusuf (Rahimahullah) asked Imam Abu Hanifah (Rahimahullah), 'Did Hadrat Umar (Allah be pleased with him) have any compact from the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) for 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*?' The Imam replied, 'Hadrat Umar was not one to invent on his own; certainly he had some proof with him for this!'" (also found in Maraqi ul-Falah, pg. 81, by Imam al-Shurunbulali and Bahr ur Ra'iq, vol.2, pg. 66, by Imam ibn Nujaim al-Misri).

(3) Imam al-Tirmidhi (d. 279/892; Rahimahullah)

Imam Tirmidhi said:

"Umar, Ali as well as other Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) and Sufyan al-Thauri, Ibn al-Mubarak and Imam al-Shafi'i (Allah's mercy be upon them), all believed in 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*, and Imam Shafi'i has stated that he had seen the people of Makkah saying 20 *rak'ahs* (see Sunan al-Tirmidhi, vol.1, pg. 99).

(4) Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was written in the most authentic book on Maliki Fiqh, al-Mudawwanah (vol.1, pg. 193-94), by Qadi Sahnoon (Rahimahullah):

"Ibn al-Qasim said, 'The *rak'ahs* (of *taraweeh*) with *witr* are 39.' Imam Malik said, 'This is what the people have agreed upon from amongst the predecessors, and the people have not stopped doing it.'" (For an explanation of why it was 36 *rak'ahs* see the quote below from Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri).

(5) Hafiz Ibn Humam (d. 861/1457; Rahimahullah)

Allamah Ibn Humam asserts that it has been established from genuine authority that the Companions and their Successors (tabi'in) used to say twenty *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* during the auspicious time of Umar (Allah be pleased with him); this authority of Yazid ibn Ruman has been reported from Sa'ib ibn Yazid that, 'during Umar's auspicious time we used to say twenty *rak'ahs*.' The genuineness of this authority has been verified by Imam Nawawi in the synopsis (see Fath al-Qadir, vol.1, pg. 407 and Nasb-ur-Rayah, vol.1, pg. 294, by Hafiz al-Zaylai). Hafiz Ibn Humam also said in Fath al-Qadir (vol.1, pg. 470):

"At last unanimity was formed on 20 *rak'ahs* of prayer and this alone is in succession." This last statement has also been said in similar words by Ibn Taymiyya in his Minhaj us-Sunnah (vol.2, pg. 224).

(6) Imam Ata ibn Abi Rabah (Rahimahullah)

The august successor (Tabi'in) and Mufti of Makkah in his time said:

"I have seen the Companions, and other people in Makkah saying 23 *rak'ahs*, including the *witr*."

This report is Hasan (good). (see Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, pg. 406, Fath al-Bari, vol.4, pg. 219, of Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Qiyam ul-Layl, pg. 91, by Imam Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi).

(7) Imam Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (d. 620/1223; R.A)

The Imam of the Hanbali's in his time, Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi, said in his book al-Mughni (vol.1, pg 803):

"There has been the Companion's consensus (Ijma-as-Sahaba) on 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*."

(8) Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d. 1352 AH; Rahimahullah)

It was stated in his published lecture, Tirmidhi al-ma'ruf ba-Arfa'sh-Shazzi (vol.1 pg. 329) :

"Not even one of the the four Imams believes in less than 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh*; the practise and belief of the majority of the Companions was also this. Imam Malik (Allah's mercy be upon him) believes in more than 20 *rak'ahs*; he is positive that they are 36. According to Imam Malik's practise only 20 *rak'ahs* of *taraweeh* will be said in congregation, but the general practise and method of the citizens of Madinah was that during the brief rest interval (after every 4 *rak'ahs*), when the Imam sat down after 4 *rak'ahs*, they used to perform 4 more *rak'ahs*. The men who said the *taraweeh* in the sacred mosque at Makkah, used to circumambulate (Tawaf) the Ka'ba during this brief recess. The people of Madinah, naturally, could not circumambulate the Ka'ba and hence, instead, they used to perform 16 *rak'ahs* more (in total) during these brief recesses."

(9) Imam al-Ayni (d. 855/1451; Rahimahullah)

Allamah Ayni wrote in his Sharh al-Bukhari:

"The number of *rak'ahs* in the *taraweeh* is twenty. Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed (Allah's mercy be upon them) assert the same thing. Their proof is the report which Bayhaqi has, with genuine authority, narrated from Sa'ib ibn Yazid. The great Companions, including Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them), as also the revered Successors (Tabi'in), used to perform twenty *rak'ahs*."

Then he said:
"The most excellent and the most advisable course to conform to is that of the Holy Prophet's and his (Peace and blessings be upon him) Companions (practise)." (Umdat ul-Qari Sharh-al-Bukhari, vol. 7, pg. 178).
(10) Hafiz Taqi-ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya al-Hanbali (d. 728/1328)

He has said in his Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya (vol.1, pg. 191):

"It has been proven without doubt that Ubayy ibn Ka'b (Allah be pleased with him) used to lead the Companions, during Ramadan, for 20 *rak'ahs* and 3 *rak'ahs* of *witr*. Hence it is the principle (*maslak*) of most of the Ulama that this is the Sunnah, because Ubayy ibn Ka'b led 20 *rak'ahs* of prayer in the presence of the Muhajirin (the emigrants) and the Ansars (the helpers) and not a single Companion repudiated it!"

So please ask yourselves: "Who are the 'Salafiyya'; are they the people who conform to the way of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), and their successors (this includes the four Mujtahid Imams, Allah's mercy be upon them) consensus on 20 *rak'ahs*, or is it the likes of al-Albani and his followers?"

May Allah guide them.

Many of us who are practising Muslims or otherwise, are familiar with the epithet 'Wahhabi'. The founder of this sect was Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab (d. 1206 AH), from the Najd area of 'Saudi' Arabia. He is also known as Shaykh an-Najdi by his opponents and his followers have been labelled as either 'Najdi's' or 'Wahhabi's' by the Ahl al-Sunnah. He claimed to be a Hanbali in Fiqh. It is well known that he fully digested the aqeedah and ideas of Ibn Taymiyya. The scholars of his time warned the Muslims to be on their guard from accepting his 'reformatory' ideas; and this work is still existent among the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah even today. The neo- 'Salafi's' of today respect Ibn Abdal Wahhab quite highly by bestowing upon him such great titles like 'Shaykh al-Islam'. I do not want to say much about his movement and activities, but a few quotes from three well known scholars should suffice for now.

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Al-Albani Unveiled
Some Observations about the Salafi/Wahhabi sect

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Al-Albani Unveiled
Who are the Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah?

Many people today like to classify themselves as belonging to the Saved Sect (*Firqatun-Najiyyah*) - ***Ahl as-Sunnah Wa'l Jama'ah***; but do these people really know which is the Saved Sect, from the many sects we have today? The following is an attempt to clarify some misconceptions by way of definitive proofs from the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as quotes from the profoundly learned Classical Scholars of Islam. Know that there is only one Saved Sect in Islam, and this is the original pristine form of Islam that has been transmitted to us by Allah Subhana Wa Ta'ala in his Qur'an, his Rasul (Peace and blessings be upon him), the blessed Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) and the great scholars of Islam (Allah's mercy be upon them all) who have been following their Straight Path for more than one thousand years of Islam's history. The first question that should be raised is: "***What differentiates one sect from another sect?***" The answer to this is simple and definitive! Know that the chief characteristic that distinguishes one sect from another, lies not in the differences of opinion that its scholars have attained by making *ijtihad* from the sources of the Shari'ah (this leads to the formation of the Madhhabs), but rather the actual belief (*aqid'ah* or *i'tiqad* in Arabic) that the scholars and laity of the sect in question are clinging onto - since the founding of their respective sect.

According to the unknown author of the book *Belief and Islam* (pp. 78-9), the faith of the People of the Sunnah and Jama'ah was spread as follows:

"Nowadays, some mouths frequently use the name of 'Salafiyya'. Every Muslim should know very well that in Islam there is nothing in the name of the Madhhab of Salafiyya but there is the Madhhab of the *Salaf as-salihin* who were the Muslims of the first two Islamic centuries (i.e; the Companions, their successors and the followers of the successors) which were lauded in a Hadith sharif. The ulama of Islam who came in the third and fourth centuries are called *Khalaf as-sadiqin*. The *i'tiqad* (belief) of these honourable people is called the Madhhab of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*. This is the Madhhab of Iman, tenets of faith. The Iman held by the *Sahaba al-Kiram* (may Allah be pleased with them all) and by the *Tabi'un* (Allah's mercy be upon them all) was the same. There was no difference between their beliefs. Today most Muslims in the world are in the Madhhab of *Ahl as-Sunnah* (i.e; most Muslim's claim to be Sunni's). All the seventy-two heretical groups (see later for the actual Hadith and its commentary) of *bid'ah* appeared (mainly) after the second century of Islam. Founders of some of them lived earlier, but it was after the *Tabi'un* that their books were written, and that they appeared in groups and defied the *Ahl as-Sunnah*.

Rasulullah (Peace and blessings be upon him) brought the beliefs of Ahl as-Sunnah. The Sahaba al-kiram (may Allah be pleased with them all) derived these teachings of Iman from the source (the Qur'an and Sunnah). And the Tabi'un (successors), in their turn, learned these teachings from the Sahaba al-kiram. And from them their successors learned, thus the teachings of Ahl as-Sunnah reached us by way of transmission and tawatur (through many undeniable chains of transmission). These teachings cannot be explored by way of reasoning. Intellect cannot change them and will only help understand them. That is, intellect is necessary for understanding them, for realizing that they are right and for knowing their value. All the scholars of Hadith held the beliefs of the Ahl as-Sunnah. The Imams of the four Madhhabs in deeds, too, were in this Madhhab. Also, al-Maturidi and al-Ashari (Allah's mercy be upon them), the two Imam's of our Madhhab in beliefs, were in the Madhhab of the Ahl as-Sunnah. Both of these Imams promulgated this Madhhab. They always defended this Madhhab against heretics and materialists, who had been stuck in the bogs of ancient Greek philosophy. Though they were

contemporaries, they lived in different places and the ways of thinking and behaving of the offenders they had met were different, so the methods of defence used and the answers given by these two great scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah were different. But this does not mean that they belonged to different Madhhabs (rather they were both from the Ahl as-Sunnah). Hundreds of thousands of profoundly learned ulama and awliya (friends of Allah) coming after these two exalted Imams studied their books and stated in consensus that they both belonged to the Madhhab of the Ahl as-Sunnah. The scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah took the nass (Qur'an and Sunnah) with their outward meanings. That is, they gave the ayats and Hadiths their outward meanings, and did not explain away (*ta'wil*) the *nass* or change these meanings unless there was a *darura* (necessity) to do so. And they never made any changes with their personal knowledge or opinions. But those who belonged to heretical groups and the *la-Madhhabi* (those who do not belong to one of the four Madhhabs) did not hesitate to change the teachings of *Iman* and *Ibadat* (worship) as they had learned from (the books of) Greek philosophers and from sham scientists, who were Islam's adversaries."

Let us now see what the definition of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah was according to the classical scholars of this aided, Victorious sect (*Tai'fatul-Mansoorah*) of Islam.

(1) **Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Haytami** (d. 974/1567; R.A.)

Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Haytami defined the Sunni Muslims as follows in his book *Fath al-jawad*:

"A *mubtadi* (innovator) is the person who does not have the faith (*aqid'ah*) conveyed unanimously by the Ahl as-Sunnah. This unanimity was transmitted by the two great Imam's Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari (d.324/936; Rahimahullah) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d.333/944; Rahimahullah) and the scholars who followed their path." Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Haytami also said in his book *al-Fatawa al-Hadithiyya* (pg. 205): "Man of bid'ah means one whose beliefs are different from the Ahl as-Sunnah faith. The Ahl as-Sunnah faith, is the faith of Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and those who followed them. One who brings forth something which is not approved by Islam becomes a man of *bid'ah*."

(2) **Imam Ahmad Shihab ad-Din al Qalyubi** (d.1069/1659; R.A.)

Imam al-Qalyubi wrote on the fourth volume of his marginalia to the book *Kanz ar-raghibin*:

"One who departs from what Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Allah's mercy be upon them) reported is not a Sunni. These two Imam's followed the footprints of Rasulullah (Peace be upon him) and his Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them all)."

(3) **Imam Abdullah ibn Alawi al-Haddad** (d. 1132 AH; Rahimahullah)

Imam al-Haddad stated in *The Book of Assistance* (pg. 40):

"You must correct and protect your beliefs and conform to the pattern of the party of salvation, who are those known from among the other Islamic factions as the "People of the Sunnah and Jama'ah" (Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah). They are those who firmly adhere to the way of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), and of his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all).

If you look with a sound understanding into those passages relating to the sciences of faith in the Book (Qur'an), the Sunnah, and the saying of the virtuous predecessors, whether they be Companions or followers, you will know for certain that the truth is with the party called the Ashari (NB-the Maturidi's are also upon the truth), named after the Shaykh Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari, may Allah have mercy on him, who systematized the foundations of the creed of the people of the truth, and recorded its earliest versions, these being the beliefs with the Companions and the best among the followers agreed upon."

(4) **Imam Abdal Ghani an-Nablusi** (d. 1143/1733; Rahimahullah)

Imam an-Nablusi stated in his book *al-Hadiqat an-Nadiyya* (vol. 2, pg. 103):

"Jama'ah is *rahma*, that is, the union of Muslims on truth brings Allahu ta'ala's Compassion. *Tafriqa* is *adhab*, that is, separation from the Community of Muslims brings about punishment from Allahu ta'ala. Hence, it is necessary for every Muslim to unite with those who are on the right path. He must join and believe like them even if they are only a small group. The right path is the path of as-Sahaba al-Kiram. Those who follow this path are called Ahl as-Sunnah Wa'l Jama'ah. It should not confuse us that many heretical groups appeared after the time of as-Sahaba al-Kiram. *Al-Imam al-Bayhaqi* (d. 458/1066; Rahimahullah) said, '*When Muslims go astray, you should follow the right path of those who came before them! You should not give up that path even if you are left alone on the path!*' *Najm ad-Din al-Ghazzi* (d. 1061/1651; Rahimahullah) wrote: '*Ahl as-Sunnah Wa'l Jama'ah are those ulama who keep on the right path of Rasullullah (Peace and blessings be upon him) and as-Sahaba al-Kiram. As-Sawad al-Azam, that is, the majority of Islamic scholars, have followed this right path. The Firqatun-Naajiyyah which was defined to be the group of salvation among the seventy three groups is this true Jama'ah.*' The Qur'an al-Karim declares, '*Do not disunite!*' This ayat means '*Do not disunite in i'tiqad, in the teachings of beliefs!*' Most ulama, for example, Abdullah ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him), interpreted this ayat as above and said that it meant, '*Do not deviate from the right path by following your desires and corrupt ideas.*' This ayat does not mean that there should be no disagreement in the knowledge of *fiqh*. It forbids separation which causes discord and dissension in the knowledge of *i'tiqad* (see Imam al-Qurtubi's opinion later). The disagreement in the knowledge (of *fiqh*) derived through *ijtihad* in the field of practices (*amal*) is not a discord, because such disagreement has brought to sight the rights, the fards and the subtle teachings in *amal* and *Ibadah* (worship). As-Sahaba al-kiram (Allah be pleased with them all), too, differed from one another in those teachings that explained the daily life, but there was no disagreement among them in the knowledge of *i'tiqad*."

(5) **Allamah Sayyid Ahmad at-Tahtawi** (d. 1231/1816; Rahimahullah)

Allamah Sayyid Ahmad at-Tahtawi, a great Hanafi *fiqh* scholar of Egypt, wrote on the subject of '*Zabayih*' in his *Hashiya al-Durr al-Mukhtar*:

"According to the majority of scholars of *tafsir*, the ayat, '*They parted into groups in the religion,*' referred to the people of *bid'ah* who would arise in this Ummah. In a Hadith reported by Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), Rasulullah (Peace and blessings be upon him) said to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), 'The *ayat* about the partitions into groups in the religion refers to the people of *bid'ah* and to the followers of their *nafs* who would arise in this Ummah.' Allah declared in the 153rd *ayat* of *Surah Al-An'am*, '*This is My Straight path, so follow it!*

Follow not other ways, lest you be parted from His way!' (that is, Jews, Christians, and other heretics departed from the right path; you should not part like them!). In the 103rd *ayat* of *Surah Al-Imran*, Allah declares, '*And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and do not separate!*' (see later for a brief commentary). Some scholars of *tafsir* said that Allah's rope meant *Jama'ah*, unity. The command, '*Do not separate*', shows that it is so and the *Jama'ah* are the possessors of *fiqh* and *ilm* (knowledge). One who descents from *fuqaha* (scholars of *fiqh*) as much as a span falls into heresy, becomes deprived of Allah's help and deserves Hell, because the *fuqaha* have been on the right path and have held on to the Sunnah of Rasulullah (Peace and blessings be upon him) and on to the path of al-Khulafa ar-Rashideen, the Four Khaliphs (may Allah be pleased with them). As-Sawad al-Azam, that is, the majority of the Muslims, are on the path of *fuqaha*. Those who depart from their path will burn in the fire of Hell. O believers! Follow the unique group which is protected against Hell! And this group is the one that is called *Ahl as-Sunnah Wa'l Jama'ah*. For, Allah's help, protection and guidance are for the followers of this group, and His wrath and punishment are for those who dissent from this group. Today, this group of salvation comes together in the Four Madhhabs, namely the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali."

It is very important to have unity in the Ummah, and to achieve this goal of unity it is incumbent that the whole Ummah has the correct and preserved *aqidah* of the Salaf as-salihin (may Allah be pleased with them all); since Allah will no doubt ask us about our *aqidah* if it is not in conformity with the divine revelation and what his Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) transmitted to us. The way of the Salaf as-salihin is the way of the saved sect of the Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah. And we should all know that the Jama'ah is the sect which has the most correct and united *aqid'ah* out of all other Jama'ahs. To know what is the real Jama'ah, one must look into the Qur'an and Hadith for evidence. If one was to look deeply in to this matter with an open and scholarly mind, one will come to the conclusion that this great Jama'ah is the one which is composed of the foremost scholars of Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, fiqh and other Islamic sciences; it is no doubt the Jama'ah which has had the greatest following throughout Islamic history in terms of scholars and laity, and this alone is the main body of Islam which represents the views of the great mass of believers (as-Sawad al-Azam) as we shall see from the Hadith evidence below. Let us now see what Allah ta'ala has said about unity and schism in the Holy Qur'an.

Qur'anic Evidence

(1) **Surah al-Imran** (3:103):
"And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah and be not divided."
Imam Sayf ad-Din al-Amidi (d. 631/1233; Rahimahullah) said in his *al-Ihkam fi usul al-ahkam* (The proficiency: on the fundamentals of legal rulings, pg. 295) with regard to the above Qur'anic verse:
"Allah has forbidden separation, and disagreement with consensus (*ijma*) is separation."
Hence, if Allah has forbidden separation then surely we must all unite on the unanimously accepted *aqid'ah* of our pious predecessors. And I have already quoted Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (Rahimahullah) as saying: "**This unanimity (in *aqidah*) was transmitted by the two**

great Imam's Abu'l Hasan al-Ashari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Allah's mercy be upon them) and the scholars who followed their path."

Mahmoud Ayoub wrote in *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* (vol. II, 275-6):

"**Ibn Kathir** (d. 774/1373; Rahimahullah) interprets the '*rope of God*' in verse 103 as '*The covenant of God,*' citing in support of this interpretation verse 112 below (in Surah al-Imran). Another view, he adds, is that '*The rope of God*' here refers to the Qur'an, as reported on the authority of Ali (Allah be pleased with him) who said that '*The Qur'an is God's strong rope and the straight way.*' He cites another Hadith, on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (Allah be pleased with him), where the Prophet (Peace be upon him) declared, '*The book of God is God's rope stretched from heaven to earth.*' Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud (Allah be pleased with him) reported -that the Messenger of God (Peace be upon him) said, '*Surely this Qur'an is God's strong rope, manifest light, and beneficial source of healing. It is protection for those who hold fast to it, and a means of salvation for those who abide by it.*'

Ibn Kathir interprets the injunction, '*and do not be divided*' to mean strict adherence to unity among Muslims. He reports on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, '**God will be pleased with three acts from you, and wrathful with three others. He wishes that you worship Him alone without associating any thing with Him; that you hold fast all together to the rope of God and be not divided; and that you show loyalty to those whom God has set in authority.**' (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, II, pp. 83-4)

Qurtubi (d. 671/1273; Rahimahullah) agrees with **Tabari** (d. 923 CE; Rahimahullah) and **Ibn Kathir** regarding the meaning of '*the rope of God*' in verse 103. He cites with approval the famous traditionist **Ibn al-Mubarak** (d. 181/797; Rahimahullah) who said, '*Surely unity is God's rope; therefore hold fast all together to* ***'its firm handle'*** (see Qur'an 2:256).' Qurtubi adds that '*God enjoins concord and forbids dissension, for in disunity is perdition, and in unity salvation.*'

Qurtubi offers two possible interpretations of the phrase '*And be not divided*':

'**Be not divided in your religion as were the Jews and Christians divided in their religions**' and '**Be not divided in following different false opinions and purposes. Rather, be brothers in God's religion.**'

As a jurist, Qurtubi observes that, '**There is no indication in this verse of the prohibition of disagreement in the branches (*furu'*) [of *fiqh*] as this in reality is not dissension. This is because true dissention is one wherein concord and unity become virtually impossible. As for disagreement in judgements based on personal effort (*ijtihad*), it is due to differences in deducing obligations (*fara'id*) and the minutiae of law.**' On page 279, **Imam al-Razi** (d. 606/1210; Rahimahullah) was quoted as saying in conclusion to his commentary on the above ayat:
'If a person going down into a well must hold fast to a rope in order that he may not fall in, so also the Book of God, His covenant, religion and obedience to Him, as well as unity and harmony among the people of faith are means of security for anyone who holds fast to them from falling into the bottom of Hell.'"
(2) Surah al-Imran (3:105):
"**And be not like those who separated and disputed after the clear proofs had come unto**

them: For such there is an awful doom."
(3) Surah al-Imran (3:110):
"**Ye are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin the good and forbid the evil; and ye believe in Allah**"
(4) Surah Al-An'am (6:159):
"**As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou has no part in them in the least: Their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.**"
(5) Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:52-53):
"**And verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord, so keep your duty unto Me. But they have broken their religion among them into sects, each sect rejoicing in its tenets.**"
(6) Surah Al-Rum (30:32):
"**Those who split up their Religion, and become Sects, each sect exulting in its tenets.**"
(7) Surah Al-Nisa (4:115):
"**He that disobeys the Apostle (Muhammad) after guidance has been made clear to him and follows a way other than that of the believers, We appoint for him that unto which he himself hath turned, and expose him unto Hell - a hapless journey's end!**"
(8) Surah Al-An'am (6:153):
"**This is My Straight path, so follow it. Follow not other ways, lest ye be parted from His way. This has he ordained for you, that ye may ward off (evil).**"

Hadith Evidence

(1) **Imam Abu Dawood** (Rahimahullah) has quoted the well known Hadith concerning the division of the Muslim Ummah into seventy-three sects in his Sunan (3/4580, English edn):
Abu Amir al-Hawdhani said, "Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (may Allah be pleased with him) stood among us and said, 'Beware! The Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) stood among us and said': 'Beware! The People of the Book before (you) were split up into 72 sects, and this community will be split up into 73, seventy-two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group (Jama'ah).'

Another version of the above Hadith has been reported by Hafiz Ibn Kathir (Rahimahullah) in The signs before the day of Judgement (pg. 14):

"Awf ibn Malik reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'The Jews split into 71 sects: one will enter Paradise and 70 will enter Hell. The Christians split into 72 sects: 71 will enter Hell and one will enter Paradise. By Him in Whose hand is my soul, my Ummah will split into 73 sects: one will enter Paradise and 72 will enter Hell.' Someone asked, 'O Messenger ofAllah (Peace be upon him), who will they be?' He replied, 'The main body of the Muslims (al-Jama'ah).' Awf ibn Malik is the only one who reported this Hadith, and its isnad is acceptable."
And in another version of this Hadith the Prophet (Peace be upon him) goes onto say that the saved sect, "...Are those who follow my and my Sahaba's path" (Tirmidhi, vol. 2, pg. 89)

Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad al-Sirhindi (d. 1034/1624; Rahimahullah) who is regarded by many people in the Indian sub-continent as a great renovator of the Tenth Islamic Century (*Mujaddid alf Thani*) wrote in his *Maktubat* (Vol. 3, Letter 38):

"It was declared in a Hadith that this Ummah would part into 73 groups, 72 of which would go to Hell. This Hadith informs us that the 72 groups will be tormented in the Fire of Hell. It does not inform us that they will remain in torment eternally. Remaining in the torment of Hell Fire eternally is for those who do not have Iman. That is, it is for disbelievers. The 72 groups, on account of their corrupt beliefs, will go to Hell and will burn as much as the corruptness of their beliefs. One group, the 73rd, will be saved from Hell Fire because their belief is not corrupt. If among the members of this one group there are those who committed evil deeds and if these evil deeds of theirs have not been forgiven through repentance or intercession, it is possible that these, too, will burn in Hell as much as their sins. All of those who are in the 72 groups will go to Hell. But none of them will remain in Hell eternally. Not all of those who are in this one group will go to Hell. Of these only those who have committed evil deeds will go to Hell. The 72 reported groups of bid'ah, which will go to Hell, should not be called disbelievers, because they are Ahl al-Qibla (people of the Qibla in prayer). But, of these, the ones who disbelieve those facts in the Deen that are indispensably required to be believed, as well as those who deny the rules of the Shari'ah which every Muslim has heard and knows, become disbelievers."

In another letter (vol. 1, letter 80) he said:

"There is no doubt whatsoever that the sect that made conforming to the conduct of the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) necessary, that alone is the Ahl as Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah."
Shaykh Abdal Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561/1166; Rahimahullah) stated in his commentary to the above Hadith in *Ghunyat at-Talibin* (pg. 90),
"The Believer should adapt himself to the Sunnah and to the Jama'ah. The Sunnah is the way shown by Rasulullah (Peace be upon him). The Jama'ah is composed of the things done unanimously by the Sahaba al-Kiram who lived in the time of the four caliphs called *Khulafa' ar-Rashidin* (and others in their path). A Muslim must prevent the multiplication of the men of *bid'ah* and keep away from them, and should not greet them (as given in many Hadith on this issue). Ahmad ibn Hanbal (rahimahullah), the Imam of our Madhhab, said that greeting a man of *bid'ah* meant loving him since it had been declared in a Hadith, '*Disseminate (your) greeting (salaam)! Love one another in this way!*' He also said (pg. 143): "*The title, Ahl as-Sunnah, which the innovators have expressed for themselves is not appropriate for them.*"

Although Ibn Taymiyya was accused of holding certain corrupt points in his *aqid'ah*, which led so many scholars to denounce him for his heresy, he never the less hit the right point when he described those who are the real Sunni's in his *Aqeedat-il-Wasitiyyah* (pg. 154):

" Their creed is the religion of Islam which was sent to the world by Allah through the Prophet (Peace be upon him). But the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'My Ummah will get divided into 73 sects and each one will go to Hell save one and that one is the Jama'at.' Also in one

Hadith he said, 'They are those people who will follow this path which I and my Sahaba follow today.' Therefore they have caught hold of Islam unalloyed from every adulteration and these are the people of Ahl as-Sunnah Wa'l Jama'ah. This group includes the truthful, the martyrs and the virtuous; it includes the minarets of guidance, lamps in the darkness and owners of such superiorities and virtues who have been already mentioned. It includes the saints and also those Imams on whose guidance Muslims are unanimous. It is this successful group about which the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said: 'One group from my Ummah will always remain dominant with truth; the opponents will never be able to harm its members or afflict them upto the Doomsday.'"

(2) **Imam Muslim** (Rahimahullah) has collected a number of variant Hadith on the saved sect. He has related a longer version of the last Hadith quoted above:

"Abdal Rahman ibn Shamasa al-Mahri said: 'I was in the company of Maslama bin Mukhallad and Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (may Allah be pleased with them).' Abdullah said, '*The Hour shall come only when the worst type of people are left on the earth. They will be worse than the people of pre-Islamic days. They will get what ever they ask of Allah.*' While we were sitting Uqba ibn Amir came, and Maslama said to him, '*Uqba, listen to what Abdullah says.*' Uqba said, 'He knows, so far as I am concerned, I heard the Prophet (Peace be upon him) say: *A group of people from my Ummah will continue to fight in obedience to the Command of Allah, remaining dominant over their enemies. Those who will opose them shall not do them any harm. They will remain in this condition until the Hour over takes them.*' (At this) Abdullah said, '*Yes. Then Allah will raise a wind which will be fragrant like musk and whose touch will be like the touch of silk; (but) it will cause the death of all (faithful) persons, not leaving behind a single person with an iota of faith in his heart. Then only the worst of men will remain to be overwhelmed by the Hour.*'" (*Sahih Muslim*, 3/4721, English ed'n, see also *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9/414, English ed'n)

Imam Nawawi (d. 676/1277, Rahimahullah) said in his *Sharh Muslim* (vol. 2, pg. 143):

"The group of people (mentioned in the above Hadith) consists of scholars, jurisprudents, authorities on Hadith, those who enjoin Good (Maroof) and forbid Evil (Munkar) and all such persons who do good deeds. Such righteous persons may be found spread all over the world."

Imam al-Tirmidhi (Rahimahullah) said:

"The explanation of al-Jama'ah according to the people of knowledge: They are the people of fiqh, knowledge and Hadith." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, 4/2167; Ahmad Shakir ed'n)

Imam Bukhari (Rahimahullah) stated in his *Sahih* (vol. 9, chapter. 10, English ed'n),

"The statement of the Prophet (Peace be upon him): 'A group of my followers will remain victorious in their struggle in the cause of the Truth.' Those are the religious(ly) learned men (Ahl ul-Ilm)."

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Rahimahullah) said about this group:

"If it is not the people of Hadith, then I do not know who they may be." (*Sahih Muslim Sharif-Mukhtasar Sharh Nawawi*, vol. 5, pg. 183, W. Zaman)

Qadi Iyad (Rahimahullah) said in *ash-Shifa* (pg. 188):

"In a Hadith from Abu Umama (Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, `*A group of my community will remain constant to the truth, conquering their enemy until the command of Allah comes to them while they are still in that condition.*' He was asked, '*Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), where are they?*' He replied, `*In Jerusalem.*'"

(3) **Imam Muslim** (Rahimahullah) has related in his *Sahih* (3/4553) under the chapter heading '**Instruction to stick to the main body of the Muslims in the time of the trials and warning against those inviting people to disbelief**', a Hadith on the authority of Hudhaifa ibn al-Yaman (Allah be pleased with him), who said:
"People used to ask the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) about the good times, but I used to ask him about (the) bad times fearing lest they overtake me. I said, 'Messenger of Allah, we were in the midst of ignorance and evil, and then God brought us this good (time through Islam). Is there any bad time after this good one?' He said, 'Yes'. I asked, 'Will there be a good time again after that bad time?' He said, 'Yes, but therein will be a hidden evil.' I asked, 'What will be the evil hidden therein?' He said, '(That time will witness the rise of) the people who will adopt ways other than mine and seek guidance other than mine. You will know good points as well as bad points.' I asked, 'Will there be a bad time after this good one?' He said, 'Yes. (A time will come) when there will be people standing and inviting at the gates of Hell. Whoso responds to their call, they will throw them into the fire.' I said, 'Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), describe them for us.' He said, 'All right. They will be a people having the same complexion as ours and speaking our language.' I said, `Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), what do you suggest if I happen to live in their time?' He said, 'You should stick to the main body of the Muslims and their leader' I said, 'If they have no (such thing as the) main body of the Muslims and have no leader?' He said, 'Separate yourself from all these factions, though you may have to eat the roots of trees until death comes to you and you are in this state.'"
(NB-It is not likely that there will be an absence of a Jama'ah, since I have already quoted the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: '**A group of people from my Ummah will continue to fight in obedience to the command of Allah, remaining dominant over their enemies. Those who will oppose them shall not do them any harm. They will remain in this condition until the Hour overtakes them.**')

(4) **Abu Hurayra** (Allah be pleased with him) reported the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) as saying:

"Who (ever) defected from the obedience (to the Amir) and separated from the main body of the Muslims - then he died in that state - would die the death of one belonging to the days of Jahiliyya (pre-Islamic ignorance). And he who is killed under the banner of a man who is blind (to the cause for which he is fighting), who gets flared up with family pride and fights for his tribe - is not from my Ummah, and whoso from my followers attacks my followers (indiscriminately) killing the righteous and the wicked of them, sparing not (even) those staunch

in faith and fulfilling not his obligation towards them who have been given a pledge (of security), is not from me." (*Sahih Muslim*, 3/4557 & 4555; English ed'n)

Imam al-Bayhaqi (d. 458/1066; Rahimahullah) stated in his: *The Seventy-Seven Branches of Faith* (pg. 42-3), under the fiftieth branch of faith (*50 - Holding firmly to the position of the majority*): "God Most High has said: *Hold fast, all together, to the rope of God, and do not be disunited.* [3:103]. Muslim (Rahimahullah) relates on the authority of Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, '*Whoever is disobedient, and departs from the majority, and then dies, has died in a state of Jahiliyya.*' He also relates the following Hadith on the authority of Ibn Shurayh (Allah be pleased with him): '*After I am gone, there will come days of corruption and turmoil. When you see people damaging the unity of the Community of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), you must fight them, whoever they may happen to be.*'

Abdal Hakim Murad (the translator of the above book) said in the footnote to the fiftieth branch of faith: 'Orthodoxy in Islam is defined as the doctrine of ahl al-sunna wa'l jama'a, the People of the Sunna and the Community. To know whether a doctrine or practise is orthodox or heretical, the Muslim is required to find out whether it is recognised by the majority of Muslim scholars (see later for Imam al-Munawi's commentary). Thus even without looking into their theology, he will know that sects such as the Isma'ilis, the Khariji's, the Wahhabi's, the Twelver Shi'a and others (not to mention anti-Islamic groupings such as the Ahmadiya and the Bahais) are to be repudiated.'"

(5) **Ibn Abbas** (Allah be pleased with him) reported the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as saying:

"One who found in his Amir (the ruler of the true Islamic state; which is absent today) something which he disliked should hold his patience, for one who separated from the main body of the Muslims even to the extent of a handspan and then he died, would die the death of one belonging to the days of Jahiliyya." (*Sahih Muslim*, 3/4559; English ed'n & *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9/257; English ed'n)

(6) **Imam's Ahmad** and **Abu Dawood** (Allah's mercy be upon them) said that Abu Dharr (Allah be pleased with him) reported the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as saying:
"He who separates from the main body (of the Ummah) by even a hand's breadth from the Community he throws off Islam from his neck." (*Mishkat-ul-Masabih*, 1/185 & *Sunan Abu Dawood*, 3/4740)
NB-The following five Hadith have been mentioned by the great scholar of Hadith, Hafiz Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1201; Rahimahullah) in his *Talbis Iblis* (section entitled: *Adherence to the Sunnah and Jama'ah*). A section of the above work has been translated by Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips in to English, under the title: *The Devil's Deception of the Shee'ah* (pp. 4-5). Bilal Philips has put footnotes to the five Hadith that I will be quoting below (to declare some of the Hadith to be Da'eef), but one thing that should be mentioned is that he has mainly relied upon al-Albani's classification of the Hadiths in question; hence these 'classifications' of al-Albani need re-verifying! I say this because it is a well known fact that Hafiz Ibn al-Jawzi was noted for his exceptional stringency in accepting Hadith, and he has been known to have declared some of the Hadith in Bukhari/Muslim to be Da'eef, as well as declaring some sound Hadith to be fabricated! Nevertheless, I would like to make it clear to those readers who are unaware of the status of Bilal Philips, that he has heavily depended on the classifications of al-

Albani in most of his books! If the esteemed reader is convinced that the errors of al-Albani are most apparent, then one should beware of the status of those Hadiths that have been used by Bilal Philips (on account of his accepting al-Albani's classifications). Bilal Philips seems to be a leading critic of Taqleed who has been swept away by the tide of modern day "Salafiyyism"; and it seems that he has 'blindly' accepted the classifications of al-Albani without himself reverifying al-Albani's classifications! I ask you, is this not a clear cut example of Taqleed? If it has been proven that al-Albani's classifications are unreliable, would it not be just for Bilal Philips to re-verify all the Hadiths that have been authenticated by al-Albani and correct any misclassifications in his books? Allah know's best.

(7) **'Umar** (Allah be pleased with him) reported that on one occasion Allah's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) stood up among them and said, "**Whoever among you desires the centre of paradise should keep close to the Jama'ah for the Devil closely accompanies the solitary individual and is more distant from two.**" (Collected by Imam Tirmidhi)

(8) And **'Arfajah** (Allah be pleased with him) reported (Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him, as saying): "**that Allah's hand is over the Jama'ah and the Devil is with whoever deviates from the Jama'ah.**" (Collected by Imam al-Tabarani)

(9) **'Abdullah ibn Masood** (Allah be pleased with him) reported that once Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) drew a line in the dust with his hand and said, "**This is the straight path of Allah.**" Then he drew a series of lines to the right of it and to the left and said, "**Each of these paths has a devil at its head inviting people to it.**" He then recited (Qur'an 6:153), "**Verily this is my straight path so follow it and do not follow the (twisted) paths.**" (Collected by Ahmad, Nisai and Darimi; see *Mishkat ul-Masabih*, 1/166)

(10) **Mu'adh ibn Jabal** (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) said, "**The Devil is like a wolf among humans as a wolf is among sheep; it snatches the stray sheep. So beware of the paths which branch off and adhere to the Jama'ah, the masses and the masjid.**" (Collected by Imam Ahmad; NB- The version given in Mishkat, 1/184, also on the authority of Imam Ahmad does not have the addition 'the masses and the masjid.')

(11) And **Abu Dharr** (Allah be pleased with him) reported from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that, "**Two are better than one, and three better than two; so stick to the Jama'ah for verily Allah, Most Great and Glorious, will only unite my nation on guidance.**" (Collected by Ahmad)

(12) **Al-Harith al-Ashari** (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said:

"I bid you to do five things: to remain attached to the main body (Jama'ah of Muslims), listen to your ruler (the Khalif of the Islamic state) and obey him, and migrate, and fight in the way of Allah. And he who detaches himself from the main body of the Muslims (Jama'ah) to the extent of one span of hand, he in fact, throws off the yoke of Islam from his neck, and he who calls with the call of ignorance, he is one from the denizens of Hell beyond doubt, even if he observes fast

and says prayers and considers himself as a Muslim." (Musnad Ahmad, vide: Selection from Hadith, no. 288; by A.H. Siddique)

(13) **Ibn Umar** (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) as saying:
"Follow the great mass (as-Sawad al-Azam) for he who kept himself away from it, in fact would be thrown in Hell Fire." (Ibn Majah; vide: Mishkat, 1/174, by A.H. Siddiqui).
The translator of *Mishkat-ul-Masabih* (A.H. Siddiqui, pg. 113) said in the footnote to the last Hadith:
"There is a good deal of difference of opinion as to what the term Sawad al-Azam implies. The overwhelming majority of the scholars are of the view that As-Sawad al-Azam means the largest group of the learned scholars and pious persons whose opinions are held in high esteem in Islam."
(14) Imam al-Shafi'i (Rahimahullah) said in his *Risala* (pg. 252-3):
"Sufyan (ibn Uyayna) told us from Abd al-Malik ibn Umayr from Abd al-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ibn Masood from his father, that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, `*God will grant prosperity to His servant who hears my words, remembers them, guards them, and hands them on. Many a transmitter of law is no lawyer (faqih) himself, and many may transmit law to others who are more versed in the law than they. The heart of a Muslim shall never harbour vindictive feelings against three: sincerity in working for God; faithfulness to Muslims; and conformity to the community of believers (Jama'ah) - their call shall protect (the believers) and guard them from (the Devil's) delusion.*'" (vide: *Sunan al-Darimi*, vol. 1, pp. 74-6; Ibn Hanbal, vol. 6, pg. 96; *Musnad al-Shafi'i*, vol. 1, pg. 16; *Mishkat-ul-Masabih*, 1/228; and al-Bayhaqi in his *al-Madkhal*).
Imam al-Shafi'i said (pg. 253): "The Apostle's (Peace be upon him) order that men should follow the Muslim community is a proof that the *ijma* (consensus) of the Muslims is binding."
(15) **Imam al-Shafi'i** (Rahimahullah) stated in *al-Risala* (pg. 286-7):
"And Sufyan (also) told us from `Abd Allah ibn Abi Labid from `Abd Allah ibn Sulayman ibn Yasar from his father, who said: `Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) made a speech at al-Jabiya in which he said: *The Apostle of God (Peace be upon him) stood among us by an order from God, as I am now standing among you, and said:* Believe my Companions, then those who succeed them (the Successors), and after that those who succeed the Successors; but after them untruthfulness will prevail when people will swear (in support of their saying) without having been asked to swear, and will testify without having been asked to testify. Only those who seek the pleasure of Paradise will follow the community, for the devil can pursue one person, but stands far away from two. Let no man be alone with a woman, for the devil will be third among them. He who is happy with his right (behaviour), or unhappy with his wrong behaviour, is a (true) believer.'" (see also *Musnad al-Shafi'i*, vol. 2, pg. 187; and Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, pg. 112-13, 176-81).
Imam al-Shafi'i said in conclusion to this Hadith:
"He who holds what the Muslim community (Jama'ah) holds shall be regarded as following the community, and he who holds differently shall be regarded as opposing the community he was ordered to follow. So the error comes from separation; but in the community as a whole there is no error concerning the meaning of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and analogy (*qiyas*)."
(16) **Imam Hakim** (1/116) has related a Sahih Hadith from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) in the following words: "**My Ummah shall not agree upon error.**"

(17) **Imam al-Tirmidhi** (4/2167) reported on the authority of Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), who said: "**Verily my Ummah would not agree (or he said the Ummah of Muhammad) would not agree upon error and Allah's hand is over the group and whoever dissents from them departs to Hell.**" (see also Mishkat, 1/173)

Imam al-Azizi (d. 1070/1660; Rahimahullah) quoted Imam al-Munawi's (d. 1031/1622; Rahimahullah) commentary to the last Hadith in his *al-Siraj al-munir sharh al-Jami al-saghir* (3.449), as follows:- ***Allah's hand is over the group***

(**al-Azizi**): Munawi says, "Meaning his protection and preservation of them, signifying that the collectivity of the people of Islam are in Allah's fold, so be also in Allah's shelter, in the midst of them, and do not separate yourselves from them." The rest of the Hadith, according to the one who first recorded it (Tirmidhi), is:-

and whoever descents from them departs to hell.

Meaning that whoever diverges from the overwhelming majority concerning what is lawful or unlawful and on which the Community does not differ has slipped off the path of guidance and this will lead him to hell." (vide: *The Reliance of the Traveller*, pg. 25)

The Ash'ari School

The following is a defence of the Ash'ari school by one of the foremost scholars of Hadith and Fiqh in Makkah at the moment - Shaikh Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki al-Makki.

Shaykh Muhammad 'Alawi Maliki: "Many sons/daughters of Muslims are ignorant of the Ash'ari School, whom it represents, and its positions on the tenets of the Islamic faith (*aqidah*), and yet some of them are not God-fearing enough to refrain from accusing it of deviance, departure from the religion of Islam, and heresy about the attributes of Allah. The ignorance of the Ash'ari school is a cause of rendering the unity of the Ahl al-Sunnah dispersing its ranks. Some have gone as far as to consider the Ash'aris among the categories of heretical sects, though it is beyond me how believers can be linked with misbelievers, or how Sunni Muslims can be considered equal with the most extreme faction of the Mu'tazilites, the Jahmites.

"Shall We deal with Muslims as We do criminals? How is it that you judge?" [Qur'an 68:35-36]

The Ash'aris are the Imams of the distinguished figures of guidance among the scholars of the Muslims, whose knowledge has filled the world from east to west, and whom people have unanimously concurred upon their excellence, scholarship, and religiousness. They include the first rank of Sunni scholars and the most brilliant of their luminaries, who stood in the face of the excesses commited by the Mu'tazilites, and who constitute whole sections of the foremost Imams of Hadith, Sacred Law, Quranic exegesis. **Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad ibn Hajar 'Asqalani** (d. 852/1449; Rahimullah), the mentor of Hadith scholars and author of the book "*Fath al-Bari bi sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*", which not a single Islamic scholar can dispense with, was Ash'ari. The shaykh of the scholars of Sunni Islam, **Imam Nawawi** (d. 676/1277; Rahimullah), author of "*Sharh Sahih Muslim*" and many other famous works, was Ash'ari. The master of Qur'anic exegetes, **Imam Qurtubi** (d. 671/1273; Rahimullah), author of "*al-Jami' li ahkan al-Qur'an*", was Ash'ari. **Shaykh al-Islam ibn Hajar Haytami** (d. 974/1567; Rahimullah), who wrote "*al-Zawajir 'an iqtiraf al-kaba'ir*", was Ash'ari. The Shaykh of Sacred Law and Hadith, the conclusive definitive **Zakariyya Ansari** (d. 926/1520; Rahimullah), was Ash'ari. **Imam Abu Bakr Baqillani** (d. 403/1013; Rahimullah), **Imam 'Asqalani**; **Imam Nasafi** (d. 710/1310; Rahimullah); **Imam Shirbini** (d. 977/1570; Rahimullah); **Abu Hayyan Tawhidi**, author of the Qur'anic commentary "*al-Bahr al-muhit*"; **Imam ibn Juzayy** (d. 741/1340; Rahimullah); author of "*al-Tashil fi 'ulum al-Tanzil*"; and others - all of these were Imams of the Ash'aris. If we wanted to name all of the top scholars of Hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, and Sacred Law who were Imams of the Ash'aris, we would be hard put to do so and would require volumes merely to list these illustrious figures whose wisdom has filled the earth from east to west. And it is incumbent upon us to give credit where credit is due, recognising the merit of those of knowledge and virtue who have served the Sacred Law of the Greatest Messengers (Allah bless him and grant him peace). What good is to be hoped for us if we impugn our foremost scholars and righteous forbearers with charges of aberrancy and misguidance? Or how should Allah give us the benefit of their scholarship if we believe it is deviance and departure from the way of Islam? I ask you, is there a single Islamic scholar of the present day, among all the PhD.'s and geniuses, who has done what Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani or Imam Nawawi have, of the service rendered by these two noble Imams (May Allah enfold them in His mercy and bliss) to the pure Prophetic Sunnah? How should we charge them and all Ash'aris with abberancy when it is we who are in need of their scholarship? Or how can we take knowledge from them if they were in error? For as Imam Zuhri (d. 124/742; rahimullah) says, "**This knowledge is religion, so look well to whom you are taking your religion from.**"

Is it not sufficient for someone opposed to the Ash'aris to say, "Allah have mercy on them, they used reasoning (*ijtihad*) in figuratively interpreting the divine attributes, which it would have been fitter for them not to do"; instead of accusing them of deviance and misguidance, or displaying anger towards whoever considers them to be of the Sunni Community? If Imams Nawawi, 'Asqalani, Qurtubi, Baqillani, al-Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Haytami, Zakariyyah Ansari, and many others were not among the most brilliant scholars and illustrious geniuses, or of the Sunni Community, then who are the Sunnis?

I sincerely entreat all who call others to this religion or who work in the field of propagating Islam to fear Allah respecting the honour of the Community of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) is possessed of goodness until the Final Hour, we are bereft of any if we fail to acknowledge the worth and excellence of our learned."

In conclusion, the Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah are the true followers of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them all), followed by by those who trod their path for the last 1400 years. It is in summary the followers of Imam Abu'l Hasan al-Ash'ari (Rahimullah) and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Rahimullah) in Aqeedah, and this saved sect is represented by the adherents of one of the four schools - Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali today. This is the sect which has had the largest following throughout Islamic history *as-Sawad al-Az'am*) as confirmed by the Qur'anic and Ahadith based evidence and it will remain dominant until the Hour is established, inshaAllah.

By the will of Allah, it has been proven without a shadow of doubt that al-Albani has fallen into the abyss of contradictions, errors, misquotes and so on. Whether these blunders of his are due to a weak memory gained through old age, or otherwise, Allah alone knows best! We know that al-Albani sincerely admits on some occasions his errors in the classification of Hadith; and this is praiseworthy. For example, he admitted in Sifah salah an-Nabee (pg. 28, footnote 1) about the classification of a particular Hadith: "I used to declare this hadeeth hasan (good) in previous works, until I realised that I had been mistaken, because this hadeeth depends on Hanzalah al-Dawsi, who is da'eef, and I do not know how this was unknown to me; maybe I thought he was someone else. Anyway, praise is due to Allah who guided me to recognise my mistake, and that is why I hurried to correct it in print..."

As far as I know at the time of writing this short exposition, al-Albani has not taken much heed to correct his errors let alone make aware to his readership his mistakes - as well as their necessary rectifications. I say this because even at the time of writing, his supporters in England are still quoting his "authentications" of Hadith in various books that have been translated into English. I have noticed quite surprisingly that most of his followers are still oblivious of the fact that Shaykh Saqqaf has publicised al-Albani's errors; even though Shaykh Saqqaf's books have been available in Jordan (and other countries) for more than two years!

I sincerely entreat all serious seekers of the truth to beware of al-Albani's "classifications", "fatwa's" and his extreme revilement towards the scholars and laity within the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence. This no doubt applies most strongly to those brothers and sisters who may have wholeheartedly relied on al-Albani's classifications of Hadith by way of Taqleed; in their quest to adhere to the authentic Sunnah. It is always possible for criticism to be made by a group of people whose understanding is inadequate and who lack sufficient knowledge. But: "How many there are who find fault with a sound statement, while their trouble is due to faulty understanding!" We should all take heed of the Ayat: "Nay, but those who do wrong follow their own lusts without knowledge. Who is able to guide him whom Allah has sent astray? For such there are no helpers. (Qur'an 30: 29)

And my last word on this subject are in the words of Imam Muhammad ibn Sirin (d. 110 AH; Rahimahullah, vide: Mishkatul-Masabih, 1/273, on the authority of Imam Muslim):

"Verily this knowledge is the knowledge of religion. You must carefully see from whom you are receiving the knowledge of your religion."

The weak, meek, slave in need of Allah -

Ahmed ibn Muhammad BSc (Hons), GRSC
Shawwal/March 1414/1994
England

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